

Adventure

"THE MAKING of LOUIS LAVERGNE"

A Complete Novelette

By **SAMUEL ALEXANDER WHITE**

A Tale of the North

"THE RANGE RIDER"

By **WILLIAM WEST**

*The Start of a Three-Part Serial
A Story of Love and Adventure in the Open*

"JACKRABBIT HOBBS"

A Baseball Story

"A BOOM IN BANANAS"

A Laugh

"THE TRAIL OF THE SECRET SHOT"

*A Louisiana Mystery
of Love and Politics*

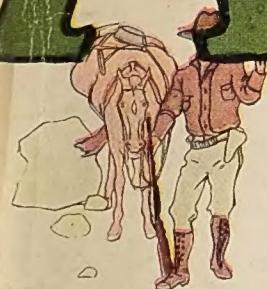
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A Story of the Sepoy Rebellion

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THAT WILL MAKE YOU FORGET WHAT
WORRIES YOU





IT WAS at luncheon. A dozen business and professional men around the table. Somebody had just spoken of "Little Eve Edgerton." This woke up a New York City District Superintendent of Schools, who is a distinguished lecturer on pedagogics and the author of several text-books.

"I read all the fifteen-cent magazines," he said, "and I read them for—*the fiction*. That is my favorite recreation. A good story gives me a mental rest, and, if you will pardon the bull, a mental stimulus. It pleases me more than a good play, because I can enjoy it in the congenial surroundings of my library."

"What magazine do you enjoy most?"

We (editorial we) did not ask that question, but the answer interested us strangely.

"Adventure," said the School Superintendent promptly. "I grab it from the newsstand on the day of publication, and that evening I plunge into its excellent fiction and forget my worries. I'd rather miss any other two magazines than 'Adventure.'"

It will surprise the very able District Superintendent of New York Schools when he reads this page to learn that we (editorial we) overheard and deeply appreciated his enthusiastic tribute to "Adventure." If he is curious he may identify us (editorial us) as the fourth man on his right who subsequently laughed loudest at his excellent stories of humorous incidents in the day's work of a man who directs nine hundred teachers.

All very personal—but that kind of thing makes us all the more enthusiastic in getting still better stories for you and the District Superintendent to read.

"Adventure" is now three and a half years old. During that time we have been doing our best to please you. Many of you have written us that the magazine has grown better with each number. At any rate, in doing our best we think we have learned to do better.

You will find some of our plans for doing better indicated on the last page of this magazine. We are hoping to make "Adventure" the most popular fiction magazine published.

In addition to quick-moving two- and three-part serials and the best short stories of adventure by men who have been there and who can write, we expect to give you complete in each number a book-length novel or two long novelettes.

What do you think of our program outlined in "The Trail Ahead," on the last page? Turn to it and find some of the things in store for you.

THE EDITOR.

P. S. We hope the District Superintendent will pardon us (editorial us) for the use we have made of his comment at a private luncheon.

T. E.





ADVENTURE

Published by THE RIDGWAY COMPANY

ERMAN J. RIDGWAY, President

RAY BROWN, Secretary and Treasurer

Spring and Macdougall Sts., New York City

6, Henrietta St., Covent Garden, London, W. C., England

Entered at the New York Post-Office as Second Class Matter

ARTHUR SULLIVANT HOFFMAN, Managing Editor

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Issued monthly. Yearly Subscription, \$1.50 in advance. Single copy, fifteen cents

Foreign postage, \$1.00 additional. Canadian postage, 30 cents

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Adventure

Registered in the United States Patent Office

March
1914
Vol. 7
No. 5



The MAKING of LOUIS LAVERGNE A Tale of the North *by* Samuel Alexander White

CHAPTER I

THE SHADE OF SETON CHANNING



CHIMO!

Welcome! the word meant. Welcome the Fort rose to Louis Lavergne after a great traverse. Hundreds of miles of wilderness trails were behind him, and now at the end of his journey his canoe nosed in to the landing on the Koksoak River. At hand, thrown carelessly on the barren shore, squatted the huddle of buildings comprising the Post.

No one greeted him. No one appeared. This was a riddle, for it was the end of August, and, in accordance with custom, the Post Indians—the whole tribe of Nascaupees, two hundred strong, from the Barren Grounds—should have been in camp about the Fort.

Perhaps they had come and gone. The atmosphere of Chimo seemed to say so. For, incomparable as was the wilderness desolation through which Louis Lavergne had just trailed, a greater desolation brood-

ed over the Post. Never in all the days he had known it had the environment so oppressed. Even the huskies, given to challenging every arrival, lifted no howl.

The thrill of welcome Lavergne had felt at first sight of Chimo changed to the ache of loneliness. For a second he hung, paddle poised, at the rude wharf, half expecting calamity to crash out of the stillness. But, nothing breaking the silence, he drew up his craft and went along the lane of palings toward the Factor's house.

As he approached, he heard a thumping. A heavy hand was pounding a table in the house, and there came like a roar the voice of Ivan Trevor summoning the Nascaupees squaw who attended to his household.

"Ayume," he called, "will you be telling me where my daughter is?"

But Ayume, whom Lavergne not without reason hated, Ayume the leathered and begrimed, short and fat of body, with her straight-mouthed, flat-nosed, wooden face, Ayume the thieving one, with the eyes of a Buddha and the black magic of a witch, did not harken. Lavergne could hear her

rattling pots and pans as she shuffled about her business and chanting a tune as she toiled. Singing in Cree, she crooned—

“Ke-se-wog-ne-man-toom,
Ke-nah-te-tin——”

The Factor pounded more vigorously. “Ayume,” he thundered, “Ayume——”

“——Ke-nah-te-tin——”

“Ayume! Ayume! Will you be stopping that tefle of a noise?”

He had her ear at last. She subsided quickly, though sullenly, since it was an injustice that the Factor should not have been able to tell from a distance that she sang lines of the missionaries’ “Nearer, My God, to Thee.” Her moccasins swished softly as she came to the door of his council room. She opened it and bowed her head before the angry Factor.

“My daughter?” bellowed Ivan. “Winona? Will you be knowing anything of her?”

At mention of the name Lavergne’s blood quickened. He held his breath.

“Um gone out,” Ayume clucked. “Walk ’long shore. Much time away. Mebbe back soon now.”

“Go and look!”



AYUME went out into the misty dusk, groping around the palings of the yard which sloped to the river. She almost walked into Lavergne, whose huge form loomed up all at once. Instantly, like a frightened deer, Ayume sprang aside, trembling a moment in the lamplight from Ivan Trevor’s doorway. Surprise, superstition, fear flashed into her face. She squealed in terror, took no time to think, and fled up the steps straight through the Factor’s council room.

A roar of condemnation followed her action, for the council room was a sacred precinct set apart for the Company’s business and the lords who transacted its business and was not to be defiled by Ayume’s presence.

“Are you a tefle this night?” stormed Ivan Trevor. “Or are you but having a tefle in you this night? And whateffer do you mean by it?”

His fist thumped a muffled thump, as on an open book. Lavergne knew what book it would be and where it would be open.

And quietly mounting the steps himself, he saw Ivan through the doorway, saw Ivan bent over the end of his council table, gray as an old moose and quite as belligerent.

His Bible lay before him. It was spread, as ever, at Solomon’s Proverbs, for Lavergne could see the deep scoring in red ink, the mark of Ivan’s hand. When he spoke, he pounded Solomon with the right fist and with the left lent color and expression to his speech by gestures almost articulate. In that left fist was his tremendous pipe, the pipe which was a half yard long and which belched smoke like a funnel, the pipe inevitable and individual which defied waste by scraping and the lapse of years.

“I am believing you are a tefle under your skin, Ayume,” he observed. “And you will be suddenly destroyed and that without remedy.”

But Ayume, fleeing from his wrath through the other door which led into the household part, only whimpered over her shoulder: “I have seen a devil, I have seen a devil!”

“And you see that same devil, Ivan Trevor,” cried Lavergne, breaking into a great laugh.

Ivan whirled round.

“Now, who are you, sir, to be calling me by name?”

For answer Louis took a step into the room. Uncouth as he knew his appearance must be after months of the wilderness trails, he did not dream it would have such an effect upon the Factor. Utter amazement, not unmixed with awe, transformed Ivan’s face. Like Ayume, he seemed to see something not human. He squared his shoulders and set his stern jaw.

“It is a trick you would be playing,” he muttered, a hoarse menace in his tone. “Raising the dead! It can not be. That I know. It is a trick, coming in the shade of Seton Channing——”

“Seton Channing!”

Lavergne’s exclamation, hurled like a missile at Ivan, interrupted his forthcoming threat, halted his hostile advance.

“Seton Channing!” he repeated, leaping forward to the council table and leaning over it till his blazing eyes were but a foot from the Factor’s. “When I went into the wilderness on this post project, those were the last words I heard. When I come out, they’re the first to greet me. Why will you

keep throwing that cursed rock tapper's name in my teeth? You know I hate him!"



QUICKLY the old man's expression changed. "Aye, now I know you whateffer," he declared. "I know the flaming spirit of you, Louis Lavergne, and your thunder-and-lightning ways. But how could I know you at first under all that hair and beard and sunburn?

"Howeffer, you are misinterpreting me. I did not take you for the man Winona will shortly marry. I took you for his dead father—Seton Channing that's dead, Louis! The son bears the same name. He will be coming on the Company's ship from the Whale River."

"And the ship hasn't come?"

"No. She is fair late. But they will be married the day it comes. I thought it would have been all over before you got back, Louis."

"I know," retorted Lavergne bitterly. "That's why you sent me away. I understood that when I went. I wonder if Winona understood!"

Ivan's wrath flared up.

"Fore Heaven," he shouted, "I am asking you as man to man, though you have been much to each other since childhood, would you be thinking of mating with her? Your birth, Louis! You know not what manner of man you are, or how you came into this world. Knowing, or not knowing, about yourself, would you be so mad as to think of it?"

Lavergne's tanned face paled, and his teeth gritted.

"No," the Factor answered for him, "you would not. Whereffer you came from, you are an honest man. I am doing you that justice.

"And delay will not be bettering you any. What I know, I know. You have held yourself well. Do it a little longer. That is my command, Louis, your Factor's command.

"The ship can't be much later anyway. But you I did not expect for a while. You have traveled fast. And, losh, but you look wild! It is fey, also, your coming in Seton Channing's shade, all hair and beard and sunburn. Heaven help me, but for the minute I thought the dead was risen! You are his image now, Louis. Look!" Ivan pointed to the opposite wall.

Lavergne looked and saw his reflection in

a beaded mirror that stood on the rude mantel above the cavernous fireplace. A cave man, bronzed and hairy like the men of the Stone Age, gazed back at him, staring with cave man's eyes, wide, fierce, full of shifting surface lights.

"Aye, the image of Seton Channing that's dead!"

"For Heaven's sake, tell me of this dead man!"

In his anger and impatience Lavergne smote down his fist. By chance it lit softly upon the Proverbs.

"Hoot, Louis!" Ivan reproved. "Work and worry has not changed you. Go under your hand, there, for curb and for wisdom. Aye, you'll see it at your thumb—

'He that is slow to wrath is of great understanding; but he that is hasty of spirit exalteth folly.'

"Take it to yourself. You are having need of it. But, indeed, I will be telling you of Seton Channing that's dead, but you will be filling your stomach first. Besides yon wildness, I see lines and hollows that spell starvation. You've been on short rations, eh?"

"I've been starving. I lost my rifle in Kaniapiskau Lake."

"Kaniapiskau Lake! How came you there? It lies not in the path to Hamilton Inlet where I sent you."

"I blazed the way for the new posts to the Inlet, as you ordered. I finished early, and I did not want to come back too soon. You understand?"

"Aye, that I do!"

"Well, there was time, and the season was right. So I sailed round from Hamilton Inlet to Quebec, and blazed a new trail overland from Quebec by way of the Company's post on Nichikun Lake."

Ivan gave a snort of incredulity and bored Lavergne with his eyes.

"Overland from Quebec! You are mad, Louis. No man has ever done it alone."

"I have done it alone."



THE old fellow came around the table. He laid a hand on both of Lavergne's shoulders and regarded him steadily.

"It has been the heat on the waters," he soothed; "and the loneliness; and the flies, maybe; and the malnutrition. These will be for the moment upsetting your wits,

Louis. It is that you have imagined this journey from Quebec. In the wilderness our imagination will be always playing us tricks."

But Louis put Ivan aside.

"I have come from Quebec," he again declared. "I know what I have done. I starved a little, but I have my reason—and much of my strength. I will tell you of the trip. But feed me first!"

Ivan immediately led the way from the council room out into the place of dining.

"I'm no saying it mightn't be," Louis heard him mumbling to himself. "And then, again, I'm no saying it might be. But, either or neither, I am saying it is fey."

CHAPTER II.

NASCAUPEE? "BREED"? OR BASTARD?

RAVENOUS at the mere smell of food, Louis sat down abruptly at the long table whereon the dishes were always spread in the roughly beamed dining-room.

Ivan nodded full approval of his lack of ceremony.

"How the hungry belly runs to the meal!" he observed. "You will not mind that the caribou steak is cold. There is tea, left from my own supper, on the stove in the kitchen. Ayume will bring it. And she will serve you, for Winona is out somewhere along the shore. Ayume, you were fleet of foot some minutes ago. Now you will be continuing the activity to serve Louis' supper. He is no teffle, and his appetite will be proving it."

Nevertheless, she did Ivan's bidding fearfully. And, much as he loathed her, Lavergne suffered her service because of his hunger. While she came and went, he could not help but gaze upon her. Not a whit had she changed since the time she mothered him in the Nascauppee lodges far above the Fort. She was the same Ayume who swore he was her offspring and who kicked him out of her deerskin tent when he had years and temerity enough to voice his disbelief.

That was a day to remember, the day when he, only a youth, had gone forth to range the vast Northland from Chimo to York Factory, from York Factory to Fort MacPherson, with François Lavergne, a mighty French-Canadian *voyageur*. This man had lost a son of his own stamp in

the Ragged Lands. And when they fused their fortunes, he called the nameless youth in his dead son's name.

Yearly in their journeying young Louis developed strength from the strenuous life, while he gained knowledge from a man wise beyond all understanding in wilderness crafts. Only when François Lavergne died of influenza in the Land of Little Sticks came full comprehension of his worth. Then Louis, with only the memory of the one who had been a father to him, essayed François's rôle, duplicated his feats on river, *portage*, and endless snow.

Mightily did Louis accomplish these feats, for there were few men like him in the North. Six feet and over he measured. Over two hundred pounds he weighed. Three sacks of flour he could pack at a load across a mile *portage*. Forty long wilderness miles a day he could cover upon his webbed rackets.

Not only did he grow in stature and in strength. He grew in knowledge, for he went down in the long Winters to the schools of Quebec. He profited by the education. He became clerk here, chief trader there, and finally Factor. But through it all the Labrador continually lured with the undeniable lure of a birthplace. So he had given up his factorship at a far Western post and gone back at Ivan Trevor's invitation to become his right-hand man, and greater upon him than the lure of the Labrador had grown the lure of Winona Trevor with whom he had played as a child.

It was a bitter thing.

And the coming of Seton Channing, a geologist and explorer for the Canadian Government, of an Autumn and his wintering at Fort Chimo was more bitter still.



AT ONCE the irony of Lavergne's existence was apparent. The handicap of his birth asserted itself. Even when reason and honor were almost overwhelmed by the surge of desire, Louis dared not speak. He dared not accept the hazard. He dared not set the pure flower of Winona's life in the mire of his own blood strain.

For all he knew, he might be a bastard white, a mongrel quarter breed, a Nascauppee whelp. So he had stood aside and seen Winona wooed by Seton Channing who, though a Southerner, was so similar to himself in height and aggressive power.

How Lavergne hated him! Hated his handsome, sneering face! From the first their personalities struck sparks. Ivan Trevor was wise enough to send Louis away on a long mission to project a line of inland trading-posts. That accomplished, Louis on his own authority undertook another, and a greater, mission in order that he might not by any chance arrive at Chimo too soon. Yet he had arrived too soon. The Company's ship, which—although the Whale was not a regular post of call—would pick up Channing at the Whale River on its yearly voyage along the Labrador coast, was unseasonably late.

As, eating, Lavergne pondered over his reception, the manner of that reception rankled in his mind. Somehow he placed the blame upon Ayume, and hated her with an intenser hate.

"She was born for a witch," he broke forth when Ayume had gone out into the kitchen. "Will she never grow old?"

"She is one hundred, if she is one day," Ivan answered solemnly. "She is older than I am, and I am full eighty-seven. But she will neffer be dying. That I know. The tefle will be catching her up some night in a cloud of fire and brimstone. She communes with him. She will go to him. Yon's logic, eh?"

"She could always work magic in the tribe, if that's what you mean!"

"Aye, there is sorcery in her. But she is like all the rest of them—fair cram full of superstition. She has heard me call you Louis, but she can not be bringing herself to believe it is really you. She will not be believing till she sees you as your old self when Sachelle has trimmed your hair and shaved your beard. Besides being a good chief trader, he is handy with the scissors and the razor, is Sachelle."

"And whose ghost is she half afraid I am?"

"Seton Channing's that's dead! She had reason to know him as well as I. Aye, finish your meal. Never fear, I will be telling you of him."

CHAPTER III

THE OTHER MAN CHILD

"STILL your appetite is not satisfied, Louis. You will be wanting the weed."

For Ivan Trevor knew the hunger that gnaws at a woodsman's soul even if there

be meat in his belly, a hunger greater than the hunger for salt and bread. He pushed across the table to Lavergne the dented canister as old and as scarred as himself.

To Louis the first puff was heavenly. Hudson's Bay, a mixture ancient and honorable, like the Company, mocked all mild Virginia and foreign blends. It was like the taste of strong meat to a man who has been reared on strong meat. The room was soon wrapped in a blue haze, and Ivan's voice took on a softer tone, drumming directions to the Nascauppee squaw.

"Ayume, take the food away. And since Winona is not here to do it with defter and cleaner hands, lay the plates again for breakfast. Add another for Louis. He will be sitting as ever at my right hand."

Ayume did as directed, while the men smoked in silence. Lulled by the luxury he had not had since his supplies went to the bottom of Kaniapiskau Lake in a gale, Lavergne half drowsed, the medley of sounds in the place beating almost unheard upon his ears, sounds of Ayume's coming and going, of clattering dishes, of crackling logs in the fireplace, of the rain swishing on the pane, the weeping, desolate Labrador rain that had come with the velvet dusk.

It was the rain, becoming more insistent in its sweep, that roused Louis a little.

"Winona will get wet," he ventured, showing well where his thoughts were.

"No," Ivan contradicted. "She has her coat. She walks, fog or fair."

"To be alone?"

"Because she is alone, I am thinking! Although I can not altogether understand the girl and her moods! Sometimes I do not think she is as happy as one with her prospects should be."

Dreamily Louis let himself relapse into lethargy. Dreamily he watched Ivan arise to throw more birch logs into the fireplace, a yawning pit of stone as cavernous as the one in the council room. The blaze flickered forth, and his eyes idly followed the dancing wraiths of shadow darting about the walls. Through drowsiness and lassitude he was on the verge of sleep when Ivan's voice aroused him.

"The tefle, man! You are nodding and doddering and fair rolling into the coals. Wake!"

He was indeed falling forward in his chair when the old Factor's hand on his

shoulder jerked him back. Awakening came to him with a sinking sensation, as when one descends swiftly and suddenly from a great height. His pipe had died out. Whatever dream he had conjured was gone.



"IT WAS the fatigue," suggested Ivan extenuatingly.

"Was it?" Louis laughed silently.

"Aye, what else?"

"A dream, perhaps. Don't you ever dream, yourself?"

Ivan frowned. "What have I to do with dreams? I am an old man. And dreams are not for this country. It is the land God gave to Cain. Dream here, and you are lost. The North will be striking you down."

"But the past comes back in spite of one. It's a good thing, too. A man who can't dream of his past can't forevision the future."

"Forevision! Now you are talking, man. A great thing, I grant you. Far greater, I am thinking, than dream."

"Aren't they the same?"

"I'll no believe it." Ivan spat into the fire with loud protest. "I'll no believe it. Dreaming is of the senses. Forevision is of the soul."

"Maybe," assented Lavergne. "To me it is not clear. But I forgot you are a Highland man, with faith in such things as second sight——"

"Tush, Louis! It's many a year since I was a Highland man. It's many a year since I dreamed or forevisioned anything that touched on my heart. Not since Winona's mother died in this post—and that was many Summers ago! Had I time to dream then? No, I would be raising my child."

"My dreams I left in Scotland with the heather smell, the loch shimmer, and the music of Inverness tides. I was a young blade then, Louis, when I left Glenelg with the Skye mist blowing and the current setting strong through the Sleat."

"And aren't those old memories powerful yet? You have just proved it by your talk. You can't say they don't lure as much as ever."

"Man," cried Ivan, "will you stop? What do you know about me?"

"Everything," laughed Lavergne. "Because I know myself. I know how the Labrador draws me. Some day, for the sake

of those old memories, you will go back. You will quit the Company."

"I will neffer do it!" The Factor sprang out of his chair with an indignant arm upraised. "Louis Lavergne, I am telling you I will neffer do it. And for why are you tempting me with the loom of Inverness? I have no business to be thinking of such places. This is Labrador. Here I have the Company's prestige and my own honor to uphold. God knows I have had trouble enough doing it. The last of the North-westerners gave me much. Free Traders have always been a thorn in my flesh. Monroe's company made me sit up of nights. And now the Arctic Fur Company will be pushing in their French noses."



"MONROE'S company!" exclaimed Louis, in surprise. "I did not know they gave much trouble up here. Who showed them the way?"

"Seton Channing that's dead. I was beginning to speak of him when you dozed off. Were you hearing me at all?"

"No," Lavergne confessed. "But I promise you I'm wide awake now. The name would stir me in my shroud."

"Aye, and the name made many a shroud in the old days. A stern man and a fey man was Seton Channing that's dead. And most of all a fey man! God be feared, but for a little I thought you were his ghost. Then I thought it was some one in his image trying to play a trick upon me. For, mark you, he came as you came out of the wilderness at dusk. Half starved, like you! And wild, with hair and beard and bronze. And, forbye, he claimed to have come from Quebec."

"He lied. Ivan Trevor, you know he lied. No man did it before me. I have done it, but I am the only one in the North with woodcraft enough and brute strength enough to do it."

Ivan nodded.

"I am knowing that," he admitted. "But Seton Channing was only mistaken—like I thought you were, Louis. It was his imagination. I learned afterward that he had come from Rigolet. Yon's Strathcona's old home, you mind. And a stiff journey at that time, I will say. Over the same path as you have projected to Hamilton Inlet!"

"He came up the Hamilton River, through the lakes, over the central plateau,

and down the Kaniapiskau River to the Koksoak. The hardships upset his mind. That I know. Also, I am thinking he was always pondering on the possibility of getting overland from Quebec till at last he came to have the delusion that he had done it. You know such a thing is so, Louis."

"He gave you his story?"

"He gave me incoherent babblings the while he grew well and fattened. But syne he remembered the trip. He told me he was an explorer, that his half dozen companions had famished by the way, and that he had left his wife at Rigolet."

"You believed him?"

"Who wouldn't? And he *had* left his wife and others of the party at Rigolet. I put it to you. Who wouldn't believe a half starved madman coming as Seton Channing came? How could I know he was an agent of the United Fur Company?"

Ivan paused, shaking his head judicially while he went through the lengthy process of recharging his monstrous pipe. Then he puffed forth his words with the same breath that sprayed the smoke about.

"So I sent him back to Rigolet on the Company's ship. And what did he do the next year but come up with a vessel Monroe had chartered. Then I knew, for my men told me of his doings. He established headquarters at the mouth of the Whale and built a post. He had spied out the land, you see, and planned a chain of trading-places. Ha, Louis! You should have been born with me. Then you could have fought with me. It was thews like yours I needed against Seton Channing and those United Fur whelps."



"WAS there trouble?" asked Lavergne quickly. "You never told me anything of this before. And there is no account of it in Chimo's log."

"No. And many things like it are not in the log. You will be granting that, eh? It was not a good thing to put in. Bitter strife for years, Louis. He was a stern, strong fellow and a good foeman. Besides, the Indians took to him. Ayume's tribe traded with him, and Ayume herself stayed in the tepees around his quarters.

"She was a strapping, good-natured Nascauppee belle in those days. I fancied then that Seton Channing looked on her, although his wife was with him in the Post. And the wife, Louis! I am still feeling the

remorse of it. But I did not know. When it came to Seton Channing's last stand and I burned his post about his ears, I swear I did not know she was lying in childbed. If I had known, Louis, I would not have touched his fort that day.

"But because I did not know and because it was the Summer visit of the Monroe ship, which lay in the offing where I hoped to burn her along with the Post, I struck. I struck, Louis. Even while Ruthven, the ship's doctor, was with Channing's wife, I struck. And even while Channing, fighting to the end, fell before my men's rifles, a child was born to him inside the smoking palisades."

"What sort of a child?"

"A man child."

"And the mother?"

"She did not die in the fire, Louis. Thank God for that! Ayume was the only woman at the Post, and she was with her. Ayume fled through the smoke ring to the tepees with the babe.

"And Ruthven, I am saying he was a brave man! He wrapped the mother in blankets and got her out unsinged. He himself was covered with burns. I can see him yet, Louis, as he staggered forth with his burden and flung up his arms before us and dropped.

"He neffer spoke again. He had inhaled the flame. I thought God would strike me dead, too, when they told me Channing's wife would not get over the shock."

Ivan's shaggy brows lowered until Louis was unable to see if there was moisture on his eyelids. He guessed as much from the husky tone.

"Louis, her grave and Channing's you may see together at the mouth of the Whale."

"And that boy Ayume saved has grown into the man I hate!" Lavergne broke out, a fierceness, a jealousy, possessing him. "He was born in the North. Now I know where he got his stature and his strength. But what happened him after?"

"Monroe had him raised. He provided for him and educated him. He has degrees and things, and explores much. Aye, it is a fine match for Winona.

"And I owe the boy a debt of happiness for his mother's sake. The father died as a strong man should die. Monroe was sore hit by his death. He never forgave me for shutting him out of the Labrador. He lost

his whole organizing ability in Seton Channing that's dead."

"Is that all you know of the elder Channing?" demanded Lavergne bluntly.

"Enough, I am thinking," parried Ivan. "I am not wanting to know more."

"But I am," persisted Louis. "You threw in a word about Ayume there, and the rest of it you are keeping back. Tell me what it is."

Ivan looked him squarely in the eye.

"I do not like putting shame on the dead," he explained, "but shortly after I had let the Monroe ship go, there was another man child in Ayume's tepee."

CHAPTER IV

WINONA

THE blow was swift and hard. At a time he thought opportune, Ivan had offset any chance of Lavergne's interference in Winona's affairs. He knew Louis as he knew his Proverbs, understood his fiery spirit and untamable impulse. He was not sure that Louis, ignorant whether he was red or white, could control himself to the last. So he had dispelled his ignorance. Now everything was plain.

Everything was brutally plain. With a single admission Ivan had put Winona beyond any far chance of Louis' attainment. He had raised no barriers. He had simply set the two apart by the length of all future generations. For through all future generations the savage blood strain would never die.

The revelation, always dreaded and speculated upon, seemed to stun Lavergne. The only feeling he had was shame. Yes, the shame of it! He leaned forward on his seat, his face buried in his hands.

He had rather be a mongrel quarter breed! He had rather be a Nascauppee whelp!

So absolutely was he sunk within his pain, that for a time he remained unconscious of any other thing, unconscious of sound or movement near him. He did not hear the door open. He did not hear the step on the threshold.

But that strange sixth sense, the existence of which no true woodsman will deny, asserted itself. Before he uncovered his face, he felt an additional presence in the room. Straightening up suddenly, he saw Winona.

At sight of a stranger she had stopped, the latch of the opened door in her fingers, the gray Labrador fog behind her slanting into the lighted room. Tiny wet globules glistened on her waterproof. Her hood, drawn close against the rain, left visible only the great, brown eyes and a wave of hair in front with the mist lying on it like a silver mesh.

Lavergne could not speak. He sat, numb of limb, staring stupidly, seeming to see her in the frame of the doorway with its background of fog as in a picture, a picture of the ideal to which he might attain at the end of a thousand generations.

As the figure on the canvas looks without word or gesture, Winona stared back. And Ivan Trevor stared at them both.

To see her abruptly start toward him was a distinct shock. A delightful shock! He realized that she knew him. Under all his hair and beard and sunburn she knew him.



"LOUIS!" she cried, and grasped his hands tightly the way she had done when he went away. "Louis!"

As quickly as she had taken his hands, she let them go and stepped back a pace, studying him intently.

"Don't you understand?" she asked. "Don't you know how I feel? Can't you realize how all these months I have starved for companionship?"

"Yes, yes, I do," spoke Lavergne eagerly. "I understand because it is that way with me."

He continued to gaze at her, as one in a spell, and what impressed him most was her wonderful vivacity. That vivacity was a sparkling, magnetic thing. Animation pulsed through her and rippled around her and flowed from her like the crisp, electric waves of a battery.

Her gaiety seemed not all the joy of renewed association with the outer world as personified in Lavergne. In her joy there was, too, emotional exaltation, and this was what made Louis forget Ivan's revelation, made his pulse leap, made the blood sing in his ears as Winona spoke in detail of her loneliness and craving.

"You can imagine," she went on, "how I have longed for the comradeship of one of my own age. Father," smiling on the gray Factor, "is hardly my age. Hardly a comrade either! More like a judge! Aren't you, you old tyrant?"

She darted to him, caught in her palms his downy, fire-crimsoned cheeks, and imprinted kisses on them.

"You," turning to Louis again, "can appreciate my feelings. You know the North. You have lived in the Post. You understand. The barrenness. The eeriness. The long Winter. The short Summer. Ship-time once a——"

Winona broke off, with an expression of consternation overspreading her face and her hands patting the air in little gestures of annoyance.

"Why—why," she stammered. "I—I forgot."

"Forgot what?" Ivan was on his feet, his pipe and his Proverbs slipping from his knees to the floor. "Girl, you are no saying——"

"Yes, I am. The ship. The Company's ship. I saw it coming up the river just as the fog closed in. That was what I came in to tell you. But Louis made me forget."

The admission caused a fierce heat of triumph to beat in Lavergne's veins. But Ivan had no thought of him or his momentary triumph.

"The teffle!" he snorted. "Why were you not telling me at once? And myself looking every day of the month for her! Where was she?"

"Below Fire Point."

"You were a long way down the shore, then?"

"Yes, but the ship can come up as fast as I did."

"She can not, in the fog. She will not be coming in at all this night. That I know. Where's yon lantern? Where the teffle is my lantern? Ayume, the lantern, the lantern! Have you broken it, you ronian?"

Ayume scuttled in with the sacred thing, and Ivan lighted it, a beloved possession as ancient as his pipe and his Proverbs. There was a great candle as big as six ordinary candles in the massive case. The case had three horn sides. The fourth side was a huge lens of tremendous magnifying power.

It was, in fact, a veritable flame pot which Ivan refused to exchange for any lantern made. Skerryvore Light he had humorously named it, after the immense Scottish beacon which stands off the coast of Argyllshire. And it threw a beam like a lighthouse.

"We will be taking a look with Skerry-

vore," he spluttered excitedly. "Understand, the ship will not be coming in this night. But we will just be taking a look to make sure."

CHAPTER V

IN THE HEART OF THE FOG

IVAN led the way. Louis and Winona followed him through the yard, along the palings, and over to a mound at one corner where a flag pole was erected. It was a staff of height, the topmast of a sealing-schooner which had been driven in by storm and wrecked on the Koksoak years before. When it was reared, cleats were nailed on each side so that it might be climbed.

Countless times in his younger days had the Factor climbed it to look for the arrival of a ship, for the coming of the Nascapuees down the waterway, or for the smoke from the camps of intruding Free Traders. Nor was he yet too old for the ascent. He hung Skerryvore Light round his neck and started up with the agility of twenty.

"Mind the cleats," cautioned Louis. "They will be slippery with the fog."

"Tush, man!" retorted Ivan. "Stay on the ground if you are sore afraid."

Such a challenge could not be ignored. The dizziness of malnutrition was still in Lavergne's head, but he could not be outdone by an old man, and that under the very eyes of Winona. He, too, began to climb.

Fifty feet in the air they went and looked forth, seeing nothing but the ball of light that Ivan's lens shot into the mist.

"She'll not be passing Fire Point," the Factor hazarded. "Not till the morn, as I said."

"Listen! Lavergne tapped his heel. "That's the sound of engines."

They were still. Faintly, but unmistakably, through the moist air came the chug-chug of ship's engines.

"It's coming," stated Louis.

"Aye, but half speed. Are you not hearing it? She's slowing more, too. And past Fire Point, I'll warrant, or we would not be hearing her so plain. But no farther—much. Mark her—slow, slow, slow. There, man, do you hear it now?" He chuckled in his triumph of prophecy.

"It's anchoring," Winona called up. Sounds were floating as plainly to her as to them.

 THEN they heard the chain roar through the hawse pipe, heard the falling anchor splash like a small whale. Abruptly came the deep, throaty purl of her siren, a resounding note that brought the half breeds from their cabins and Sachelle from his trading-room. So thick was the atmosphere that they were unable to see the steamer's riding-lights, but they saw the upper fog clouds glow pink as the engine room hatch was uncovered.

"That's all we will be seeing," Ivan pronounced. "But it's fair grand to know she's near. Here, Louis, take Skerryvore, and we'll go down."

He handed Lavergne the lantern, and Louis slipped the handle over his head, since he, this time, was to travel first.

"Your ship's here, but where are your Indians?" Louis asked as they descended.

"Now you have me cross-buttocked," Ivan replied. "I am not knowing where they are. And I am troubled about the tribe. Something has happened them or some tefle of a Free Trader has got their trade."

"They're not shirking ship time? Not afraid of the missionary?" Lavergne knew the leaning of the Nascaupes toward polygamy.

"No," responded the Factor, "they are not afraid. I am not knowing, you understand, but I am thinking it is a Free Trader."

On the ground again, Louis gave him back the Skerryvore Light. "You'll break your neck yet with that old thing," he predicted. "Why don't you get a new one?"

"Hoot, hoot!" Ivan scoffed. "They skitter the light in a pool. Also, they possess no penetration. This," proudly patting Skerryvore, "this has a focus, man. It goes through you like a flash of lightning. And the wind can crack a lung and not blow it out."

He waved back Sachelle and the Post people, who were crowding to the landing.

"She'll no be here till the morn," he informed them. "She's at anchor just above Fire Point."

Cherishing his beloved lantern under his arm, Ivan stalked off to the house. Wi-

nona and Louis came behind, walking with slow steps.

Since the approach of the ship, an awkwardness of manner had settled upon both, a restraint that hindered speech. But on the edge of the streamer of light from the doorway Lavergne paused and gazed straight into the oval face haloed by the fog.

"You know who the ship's bringing!" he broke out, speaking as a man who is close to a calamity not to be avoided.

"Yes." Winona's answer was almost a sigh, a sound like that of the wet wind drifting by.

"Do you love him?"

His abruptness was startling.

A vague alarm filled her eyes.

"Louis—I—I don't know!" she confessed.

"But you've got to know!"

"Why, what difference can it make? That is—what difference to you?"

"Difference? To me?" Lavergne's great frame shook with suppressed emotion. "I only wish I could tell you, Winona. But I can't. I haven't the right. I'm only a nameless outcast, a——"

"Stop, Louis, stop!" interrupted Winona. Both her hands were on his shoulders, and a mingled expression of pain and entreaty darkened her face. "I will not have you say those things. They hurt! You understand? They hurt!"

"Hurt you?" he whispered.

"Yes."

 HER hands crept from his shoulders to his neck. At their touch Lavergne seemed to feel the advance of her soul, and he understood with the bitterness of shame that only the stain of his birth stood between them. He realized for a truth, now, what he had always suspected: that she had given her word under the Southerner's pressure and under Ivan's pressure, under the lure and glamour of the outside world.

And he knew that to him in the long ago, before ever Channing came to Chimo, her heart had been given. He could guess the process by which consent had been wrung from a hopeless spirit. The knowledge that he was under a curse and doomed by breeding to remain apart from her, coupled with the weight of the lonely Northern life which at times oppressed her beyond sufferance, had caused her to yield.

For Lavergne knew the hinterland. He understood that the solitary existence there was imprisonment for Winona.

Affinity, home of her own founding, children—these would have made the land a new land. But a father's love and companionship, precious as that might be, was not the affinity which was her rightful portion. So through no fault of her own she sensed the Labrador only in its barrenness, its eeriness, its cometary Summer, its Cimmerian Winter.

Winona, like Louis, had been to the schools in Quebec. What outside life she had touched there, her hungry heart yearned for, and the Southland as pictured by Seton Channing was a fascinating thing. And yet she felt that she stood on the eve of a day she could not face. Her feeling was not virginal shrinking. It was but the recoil of the natural forces. The elemental in her tore her every instinct away from one man and fastened them to another—like her clinging hands.

So close had she been brought to the essences of life by this crisis in her own life, that she was shaken out of herself, out of glamouring and pining, and her spirit leaped out under primordial impulse, leaped toward Lavergne.

And Lavergne's spirit leaped to meet hers.

His arms were round her there in the heart of the fog. Through Winona's whole being the mighty strength of the man flowed in passionate longing. The Factor's command to curb himself was a lost injunction, and yet what did it profit? There was still the barrier!

Lavergne gazed dumbly into her eyes and could not speak.

Winona's eyes, holding his, were wide with anguish. "Oh, my God, Louis!" she breathed. "And I am to be married tomorrow!"

CHAPTER VI

SHIP-TIME

AT CLEAR dawn a blood-red banner, centered in gold with Sir George Simpson's head and the Hudson's Bay insignia containing the words *Propelle Cutem*, ran up the flagstaff halyards. As if its first flutter had been a signal, the Company's ship came in.

Along with all the inhabitants Louis Lavergne stood by the shore and watched her, a one-funneled coasting-steamer with two stick masts. He knew she was carrying Seton Channing, and the knowledge plunged him into bitter gloom. Not a heart throb of joy did he add to the delirious welcome extended the vessel. Oppressed by despair, he remained aloof, and the very fact of his exclusion from the tumultuous welcome caused him to view the ship-time of the year as an outsider might view it. For once he had the whole thing in perspective, and he caught the full force and significance of the event to the Labrador heart.

There on the landing he saw Ivan and Winona welcome the Captain and his officers, as exiles welcome those who bring them pardon. He strained his eyes to make out the tall form of Seton Channing. Nowhere could he see it, and a great wave of exultation swept him when he realized that Channing had not come.

What had happened? Had he fallen to the wilderness chance? Louis knew he had dangerous ground to cover in his explorations round the Whale. Why hadn't he come? As he watched Ivan and Winona escort the Captain, his officers, the ship's Surgeon, and the ship's Chaplain in state up to the Factor's house, Lavergne could hardly forbear to dart after them and inquire reasons.



WHEN they had disappeared, the scene within the house flashed upon his imagination. In fancy he could see the feast spread in the dining-room, hear the orgy of conversation, taste the flow of mellow port, smell the fragrance of Manila cigars. Always, before, Louis had participated. This time both Ivan and Winona had pressed him to be present, but he had declined.

One reason was that Seton Channing had been expected. There was, however, another, and a stronger, reason. How ever again he could sit with white men, men of birth and breeding, he did not know. He ground his teeth in a helpless rage and turned away to the river.

Here was forgetfulness. All was turmoil on land and water. The steamer's boats and the boats of the Post plied in a flotilla between the ship and the wharf, beaching a year's supplies and trade stuff for the

Fort, taking on the fur bales for the London markets. Sailors worked winches over open hatches, heaved, shouted and swore.

Others bowed their backs at the boat oars, singing in tune, and rollicked the more as they tossed additional boxes, bundles and barrels upon the muddled landing. About the landing Sachelle, the chief trader, stormed like a demigod, striving to direct the carting of the goods to the store into something like a methodical *portage*.

The half breeds were not methodical, nor the full-blooded Indians, nor yet the pudgy Eskimos—of whom, happily, Sachelle was cursed with few. They straggled down with the furs from the strong-smelling trading-room. They floundered back under burdens for the store.

They shot sturdy legs from under sturdy bodies with rolling barrels, and barked shins by the pair with carelessly thrown boxes. Every endeavor was made amid utter confusion and in riotous delight. Every fresh crew arriving with a boatload the Indians saluted by piercing yells.

"*Chimol! Chimol!*" they greeted, stopping the work to gesticulate and cheer.

And the Eskimos grunted deep in their chests.

"*Oksusil!*" they bawled; which being interpreted meant, "May you be strong!"

Not to be outdone, the ship's men reviled them in genial ways, telling them the pedigrees of their ancestors and foretelling the future of their descendants, a long and devious process, but one much to the liking of the Company's sailors.

Yet one thing was missing in the kaleidoscopic picture, and that was the Barren Grounds Tribe. There glowed among the shifting figures on the river bank no vivid dress of the Nascaupsee squaw. On the Koksoak's reach flashed no warm yellow of the Nascaupsee canoe.

No lank, sinewy, six-foot Nascaupsee men stood, as Lavergne had always seen them stand, head and shoulders over their stocky Montagnais brethren. Ivan's lieges of the upper country had for some good reason failed to make the Post this ship-time. Unless they arrived very shortly, their year's fur catch would not swell the London sales.

But the absence of these two hundred Nascaupes lessened the congestion on the waterfront. That was a benefit, for the workers had more room in which to do their

work. As red-blooded men they toiled, especially by afternoon, when Sachelle ceased storming like a demigod and thundered like a god and said and did to his day slaves what was in the French heart of him.

Only the dark made them desist. The crew and officers went back to their quarters aboard, for a gale was rising and the ship was somewhat short-handed. The clamor died down. Darkness lay like a pall upon the Koksoak, pierced only by the vessel's riding lights swaying as she swung at anchor to the vagaries of the tide.

CHAPTER VII

WORD FROM THE WHALE

L AVERGNE was loitering by night in the trading-room, full of men and smoke and marvelous tales, when an Indian brought him a message that the Factor wished to see him. He arose and went straight to the Factor's house.

Ivan was sitting at the head of the table in the council room. At the foot sat Winona, helping her father sort the despatches that littered the board.

"Ha, Louis, Company despatches!" greeted Ivan, shuffling them through and through. "Ship-time is fair grand to the heart, but it makes work for my old head."

"Yes, he has to be a man of witty inventions," explained Winona, speaking rapidly, as if there was disagreeable information to impart and she wished to soften the blow. "Even now, Louis, he is going to ask you to make another journey. And you hardly off the trail! But that is post life, isn't it?"

"It is," agreed Lavergne, regarding her curiously. "And I am no weakling to shrink from another trip so soon—if it is in the Company's interest. I suppose it is?"

Winona's manner became suddenly confused. "Well—not directly," she replied hesitatingly. "But it is a matter which is under the Company's sanction. Besides, it is my father's wish, your Factor's wish."

"Then what is it? Where am I to go?"

"To the mouth of the Swampy Bay River," she told him.

"And what am I to do when I get there?"

"Meet Seton Channing!" Winona did not look at him. She studied the papers before her, scribbling on them spasmodically with fingers that trembled.

Lavergne started. His eyes narrowed dangerously, but before his anger could burst forth in speech, the Factor forestalled him.

"It is this tefle of a despatch!" he exclaimed, impatiently pounding a paper he had open in front of him. "It says I must send my trustiest man. You and Sachelle are the only ones in the Post I can fully trust. Sachelle can not go. He has to attend to the trade. It is hard to be sending you out again like this, Louis, but there is no one else.

"Seton Channing did not come on the ship as arranged. That you know. But the Captain brought this word of his. He had not finished his geological work. He sent an Indian out to the ship with that message. He must finish, he says, and then come across country from the Whale to the Kaniapiskau."

"Walking in his father's footsteps!" sneered Louis, a great rush of jealousy overwhelming him. "And no doubt an impostor like his father!"

"Tut, tut, man! He will be marrying my daughter," sweeping a hand toward the silent figure at the foot of the table, "and I will not have you call my daughter's husband an impostor.

"Do not be letting your jealous tongue utter insane things. For why should he? He is on the Canadian Government's service, and he will come across as he says. Impostor? Not he! Nor any man! For none dare play with Ivan Trevor. I have put the fear of God into the hearts of Free Traders, and the Arctic Fur men know me too well to try competition.

"Seton Channing knows me well, too. And I know him well. He will come as he says. On the way across he will be looking for the woodland caribou and the Barren Ground bear."

LAVERGNE laughed scornfully. "Then he will get his fill of looking," he scoffed. Any Northman knows that the woodland caribou is very rare, and that the red bear is extinct in [explored Labrador."

"In explored Labrador! I am not sticking to grant you that. But Seton Channing will be traversing parts unexplored. You will admit that he is something of an explorer, Louis."

"Yes, a fine one. I know his breed.

Some day a real explorer will stumble on his bones."

"Ha, but he is taking canny care of his bones! And for why not? If I had one like Winona waiting for me at the journey's end, I would be doing the same. You understand, this is the way he has it planned.

"Men of the Whale River are putting him up the Whale Valley. Manuan Lake Indians are bringing him across the Kanachakagama country. My trustiest man will meet him at the mouth of the Swampy Bay River and, relieving the Indians there, carry him on to Chimo."

"He can't reach Chimo," Louis protested. "The Winter is too close. He will be frozen in on the Kaniapiskau. The frost will catch the Indians, too, before they get back to Manuan Lake."

"That is foreseen," Ivan returned. "The Manuan Lake bucks are bringing along dogs for themselves and for him. And in the Spring he says he has made arrangements for a Government vessel to meet him at Fort Chimo. He and Winona will be going away on it."

Lavergne winced. He looked at Winona, but she still sat with downcast eyes, and he turned to the Factor.

"Yes, and he'll put down his trip as a great exploration trip," he broke out wrathfully. "Would you call that exploring? It's only Pullman travel in the wilderness. That's about all Seton Channing is fit for. If he has the spirit of an explorer, why does he not come across from the Whale as I came, alone, from Quebec?"

"I am telling you why," fumed Ivan. "It is Winona," sweeping a hand again toward the table foot, "and he is taking no chances. Do you blame him?"

Lavergne could not reply. He could only grind an oath between his teeth.

"I am not thinking you would blame him," Ivan went on. "And if he tried, maybe he, too, could do it alone. He looks as strong as you. Aye, and he has woodcraft, also, or he would not slip about the Northland the way he does. But whether he could cross alone or not is out of the way. He will travel as I told you to the mouth of the Swampy Bay River. You will meet him there. Now I know your flaming spirit, Louis, and your thunder-and-lightning ways, and I want you to promise before me and before Winona here that you will bring him safely in. Are you promising it?"

CHAPTER VIII

A JOB FOR MEN

BEFORE Lavergne could answer, they were interrupted by Sachelle bursting wildly into the council room. He held in his hand what at first sight seemed to be an old buckskin garment. But, looking closer, they saw that the buckskin clothed a withered Indian whom Sachelle dragged by the arm.

A Nascaupée, his long face advertised him. Yet what a Nascaupée! A shriveled doll! A man-wraith! Ivan and Louis had seen blanketed papooses which bulked larger. He could not have weighed eighty pounds. His strength had leaked out like water. He was unable to stand. Like a flimsy gray lichen on a sound tree he hung sagging against the chief trader's stalwart body.

"God be feared," cried Ivan, aghast. "What have you there, Sachelle?"

The chief trader half carried his burden forward to the end of the council table. After him through the doorway, startled and mystified, came Ayume and the rest of the Post people, crowding on the steps, veranda, and threshold. In that moment Ivan had no thought of his dignity and authority to order them to depart. He thought only of the thing in Sachelle's hands.

"Speak, Sachelle!" he commanded.

"Dis man Chakoni of de Barren Grounds," began Sachelle. "I'm standin', me, on de w'arf, w'en bang! comes wan canoe at ma feet. She's ver' dark and stormee night, an' I say: 'Who's dat?' No ansaire. Den I look an' feel. An', ba gosh, I lift heem out.

"W'at you t'ink, eh? Too weak to hold de paddle. Paddle she's lyin' in de canoe bottom. An' Chakoni, he's lyin' lak wan rag on de gunwale paddlin' wit' hees han's. *Saprie*, dat's right! Just lak ma leetle daughtaire Rosa puddlin' in her tub!"

"Chakoni, man?" cried the Factor. "You're crazy. Chakoni stood six feet. He was the best hunter of my Nascaupées."

"Was," agreed Sachelle. "Look at heem now."

Old Ivan stared and could not believe. He half believed and doubted again.

"Yet it is Chakoni," Lavergne assured him. For Louis knew the hunter well.

"Chakoni the strong, the swift, whose eye was as the bright sun, whose stroke was as the lightning," croaked Ayume, in Cree, in corroboration. She, too, knew him well, for he was of her tribe.

At the sound of the Nascaupée tongue the wraith in Sachelle's hands stirred. He blinked first at Ayume and then at the Factor.



"*NOTAWENAN*," he faltered, also speaking in Cree. "*Notawenan*—" and gasped and pitched out of Sachelle's grip face down upon the floor.

"The brandy, Winona!" Ivan shouted. "The brandy! Put him in a chair, Sachelle. God help us, he'll be dying before he tells where the tribe is."

The stimulant worked. The skin on Chakoni's emaciated face, drawn tight as a drum head over the protruding cheek bones, relaxed. A flicker of light fired his bead eyes.

Reclining in the massive chair, which could have accommodated four forms such as his, he stretched forth bird-claw hands to the table edge in order to steady himself and began to croak like a shriveled mummy come to life.

Weird was the tale he told in Cree, more weird than the tales Cree runners tell as they crouch, storm-beaten, in their willow huts on the Blood Flats beyond the Ragged Lands. He told of the battle of the tribe with a sickness that struck them like a plague.

Chakoni spoke without flourish, intoned monotonously, and revealed only the bare ribs of the truth. But all hung on his naked words as on the eloquence of some silver tongue. And all were smitten with wonder at the magnitude of his tribesmen's struggle and mellowed with pity at their desperate need.

The Winter, it seemed, had been a fortunate one for the tribe. Fur was plentiful. Also, at the Summer migration of the caribou they had killed great numbers. But, working through the Barren Grounds to strike the Kaniapiskau River for the descent to Chimo, the plague had come upon them—scurvy, Ivan and Louis judged from the description.

"Thus, our father," concluded Chakoni, "are we in extremity. Two moons ago we were two hundred strong. Half are gone. Half lie helpless at Lake No-Lake. They

can not come to Chimo. They can not go back to the caches for food.

"We had to cache the caribou meat here and there as we staggered on, because none were strong enough to carry and we were beyond the waterway. I was appointed to see that meat was brought, since I was the strongest of the tribe. Every day men went out with me to the caches and fell by the way and never came in.

"I toiled alone. People starved because there was no food carried to them. Could I carry for so many? They ate what was at hand. They ate every skin in the tepees.

"Every day, too, messengers were sent out to take the news to the Post. They never reached the Post. I walked over their bodies coming in. This is how I came in.

"I went at last to Booming Thunder, who was chief.

"'We must all perish,' I spoke, 'if some one does not reach Chimo. Let another, the strongest, bring what meat can be brought. I will take five of the soundest men and start. One of the six will surely reach Canoe Cache on the Kaniapiskau where the canoes are. That one, if there be one left, must paddle or drift to the Fort.'

"So it was done.

"Six set out. Five fell. I crawled the last mile alone to Canoe Cache. I paddled. I dragged the canoe over the *portages*. I drifted. I clawed the water with my hands when I could no longer hold the paddle. I am here. Our father, we want help——"

Chakoni's words failed in his gurgling throat. He fell forward in his chair. A dark hemorrhage poured from his lips across the council table.



"SACHELLE, run for a boat!" roared the Factor. "Bring Surgeon Ballard from the ship. Aye, and Chaplain Newell."

They gave Chakoni what aid they could until the summoned men dashed in.

Surgeon Ballard, a great Viking of a fellow, blue-eyed, fair-haired, took one look at the man-wreck.

"No good," he murmured. "He's going now."

And Chaplain Newell repeated prayers as the final spark of Chakoni's life-fire flickered out.

"Scurvy?" Lavergne whispered in the hush that descended.

2

Surgeon Ballard shook his head. "No," he answered, "but something like it. Purpura, we call it, or the purples. Are there more like him?"

"Five score at Lake No-Lake."

"Good Heavens! And helpless! Newell, here is a job for men."

"I'm ready," answered the Chaplain. He was tall and slim, with features dark and finely cut. His thoughts were evidently with the dead, for he unhooked a large map from the wall and covered, as with a white shroud, Chakoni's body where it lay on the council table.

Old Ivan flung a hand to each of them. "Aye, a job for men!" he muttered, his stern eyes blurred. "And I am thanking God you are men."

"Did you think we would for a moment fail you?" asked Ballard.

"Not that; not that! But I was fearing the Captain could not spare you, being short-handed and all."

"Oh, yes, he can. There are men free down the coast whom he can pick up as substitutes. There is an English missionary and a medical student over at Port Burwell."

"Fair grand! Yet I am warning you our work will be stern. So stock well your chest with medicines, Ballard, and, Chaplain, stock well your heart with prayers. It is a job for men."

"And women," added Winona softly.

They all turned and gazed at her in surprise.

A great light, the light of devotion, shone in her eyes till the beauty of them spread and etherealized the mere physical charm of her face.

"And women," she repeated. "Do you think I can stay here while ones of my own sisterhood rot and die? Or while the little children rot and die? Ayume and I are going."

"No, don't protest. That won't do any good. You need us. If you can honestly say you don't need us, we will stay. But you can't. You know you can't. You need us. We are ready. The might of men is great, but the might of men and women is greater."

Surgeon Ballard flashed a warm smile of admiration at her. "Yours is the true Northern heart," he eulogized, "or you would not have spoken like that."

"Aye, man," Ivan proudly put in, "she

is of my flesh and blood. She is not frail. She and Ayume shall go. We will bury Chakoni and start at dawn. Sachelle, get the canoes and paddlers and provisions and all ready to-night. You will be looking after my affairs when I am away."

 BUT Lavergne was racked with anxiety at Winona's going. "It is murder to take a woman there," he fiercely declared. "You know it is. A contagious disease——"

"Nothing of the sort," Ballard interrupted. "It is the blood. A depraved condition of the system. There is no chance of catching it by contact."

"But she is running into danger," persisted Louis.

"Danger," bellowed Ivan, slapping him on the shoulder. "Man, she is my flesh and blood. She is a Northland girl, and she laughs in danger's face."

Every objection he could make overruled, Lavergne relapsed into sullen silence. Sachelle disappeared to execute the Factor's orders. The Surgeon and the Chaplain went back to the vessel to make their preparations. Winona and Ayume passed upstairs to attend to theirs. Ivan waved the Post people to bed, and he and Louis were left alone.

"Now what about my mission to Swampy Bay River?" asked Lavergne.

"This news changes the face of things. We will travel faster than the paddlers who pack the food and medicines. We can go up to the Swampy Bay, meet Seton Channing, and be back at Canoe Cache on the heels of the rest going in to Lake No-Lake. I need your help at this moment, Louis, and I am asking you to go with me and Winona."

"Then I will go with you," Lavergne returned bluntly, "although it is as bitter as hemlock drink for me to do it. For I tell you to your face, Ivan Trevor, if I were white you would not have to go to Swampy Bay River to meet Winona's husband! And I tell you, too, there is a limit to what a man can bear. I am nearly at that limit."

"When the tribe is safe, I will quit you, and I will quit the Post of Chimo. To see Winona any more would only leave blacker trouble in my heart. I don't want that. I want to remember her always as she is, as she was a moment ago in the council room here with that great light in her eyes."

"I loved it, Ivan. I loved the spirit of it, although I was afraid of her facing danger. I'll never forget that sight of her, and other sights of her, and I will not have them killed by bitterness. That's why I will quit you when things change for the better with your people."

Ivan looked at him for a full minute. Then his hand shot out and gripped Lavergne's.

"Before Heaven, you are a man, Louis!" he declared. "Blood curse and all! If it weren't for that teffish blood curse, I would neffer have Winona look at another soul!"

CHAPTER IX

THE MEN FROM MANUAN LAKE

"**H**ERE um Swampy Bay River's mouth," a Nascauppee tongue jabbered. "Camp here. Hope um come quicketty-quick!"

Ivan and Louis raised themselves on their elbows where they lay in front of their canvas fly beside the banked fire. The rock shoulder behind which they were camped shut out the view up-river, but, in a second, around the base of the rocks shot two canoes.

On the edge of the dusk they came, yet even in the gloom they could recognize the bowsman of the foremost craft as a white. The broad bulk of him and the body hunch on the thwart told that. His steersman was a lithe-limbed, straight-backed Indian. Two more Indians paddled the other canoe. Above each gunwale three dog noses pointed inquiringly shoreward.

Once past the promontory, the men caught sight of the tents of the Factor's party.

"Camp!" grunted the same Indian who had spoken before, the steersman of the leading canoe. "Wonder um Chimo men?"

"It must be the Factor's messengers from Fort Chimo," the voice of the white replied as the crafts bellied in to the flat marginal rocks. "Hello, the camp! This is Seton Channing's outfit from Manuan Lake. Is that the outfit to meet it?"

The Factor stood up.

"I am believing so," he chuckled.

"Good Lord—Ivan Trevor!" shouted Channing. He laughed a great, pleased laugh and reached a hand up to grip the Factor's. "I didn't dream you'd come

yourself. But it's grand medicine to see a white man again, especially the Lord of Chimo! How is all the Post?"

"Well. All well."

"And Winona?"

"She will be speaking for herself."

"Eh? You say she's with you? Now the gods of the North are kind! Here, Big Otter, Raven Wing, Spear-um-Caribou, you can't get me ashore too quick!"

 DISEMBARKATION marked all four of the party as expert canoeists—the standing up in perfect balance, the swinging ashore of the packs by their lashings and the dogs by the scruffs of their necks, the stepping lightly over the gunwale, and the deft lifting of the canoes from water to bank so that during the night they might not be fretted against the rocks by wind or eddy.

Upon the shore Channing shook hands again, and vigorously, with Ivan Trevor.

"And who is this man with you?" he asked.

"Louis Lavergne," the Factor told him.

Channing grasped a palm that squeezed vise-like and gazed into eyes that burned.

"Of Chimo? I did not know you. Why the deuce is your hair and beard so long?"

"If your memory's working, you'll remember I've been months on the trails," replied Louis grimly. "I had no time to shorten hair and beard before we came out again."

Channing darted him a keen glance, seemed about to speak, and then suddenly wheeled away toward the other tent, from which Winona, hearing strange voices, had emerged. He ran to her with outstretched arms, and Lavergne ground out an oath as he went.

"By Jove, but this is a sweet surprise!" he exclaimed. "To have you come to meet me—you!"

Winona's eagerness did not seem to equal his.

"Ah, you must thank our mission for that!" she exclaimed. She appeared not to notice the position of the arms that invited embrace and gave him only her hands.

"Mission? How's that, Winona?"

"We go in to Lake No-Lake from Canoe Cache. It was my father's plan to come on up to meet you."

At which information Channing's face fell, and his hands, which were inclined to

creep up from her wrists to her shoulders in embrace, dropped away.

"Tut, man, tut!" old Ivan cut in with a smile. "You will not be selfish, whatever. You have the pleasure of this meeting, and you will not be begrudging her interest in the Tribe. For it is to the Tribe we go on a matter of life and death."

"Surgeon Ballard and Chaplain Newell set out with us. But they are not hardened to canoe travel, and they thought it best to journey slowly straight to Lake No-Lake with my paddlers, who freight food and medicines. You see, it is starvation and plague with the Nascaupes."

"Starvation? Plague? Then what in Heaven's name do you mean by taking Winona there?" demanded Channing fiercely.

"Oh, you men!" laughed Winona. "Those were the objections Louis made!"

"Louis!" Channing snarled. "What has Lavergne to do with it?" He glared accusingly at Louis and then at Winona, but the girl tactfully ignored his attitude.

"Oh, you men!" she repeated. "And to answer your question, Seton, let me ask you another. Why does a nurse go upon the battlefield, or a missionary among the heathen?"



"THAT'S scouting the issue! Tell me why you should expose yourself to danger when there is no need, when a competent surgeon is along and many men. And tell me why you should do it at a time like this. Have you a right to put your own happiness and mine in peril—all for a few dirty Nascaupes?"

"I don't know about the right," Winona answered slowly, "but I have the heart."

"Aye, man," the Factor intervened with the air of a peacemaker, "she has the heart, the Labrador heart, and the spirit of the Trevors. And we need her, her and Ayume there. We will be wanting every soul we have to succor the tribe, and I was thinking your help would not come amiss. Only thinking, you understand. It is not for me to press an outsider. Take your choice. Come with us to Lake No-Lake, or go on to Chimo and await us there."

"I will certainly go with you to Lake No-Lake," decided Channing, with a swift look at Winona, "but I have to go to the Larch River first. My cache is there with my records of the Clearwater and Stillwater

country. But that won't take long if you can lend me a paddler. How many have you?"

"Three," Ivan informed him. "I can lend you one, or Lavergne can go with you."

"Good! You won't mind me breaking away from the party for a little at Canoe Cache, will you, Winona? The river won't close soon enough to catch us, and we'll be only a few days behind you. You don't think the freeze-up will come that quick, Ivan?"

"There's no telling in the Labrador," Ivan explained. "I am thinking you can make it all right. But you will have to take your dogs along for fear. It would not be nice to be caught without."

"No, far from nice!" agreed Channing gravely. "And the cursed records have to be got. There's nothing else for it. That's one reason why I came this way. I thought I would get them on my way to the Fort and save another trip up-river."

"But, still, it doesn't matter. It means only a little more hard work, and I'm used to it—with these Manuan Lake men. They've certainly put me through. They're good men and swift. They do things. Look at what they've done since we landed!"

With admirable celerity and skill the Nascaupes had set about making camp. Two pitched the flies, their employer's small silk one and the larger tarpaulin that sheltered three. The remaining Indian gathered dead boughs back on the ridges. He then borrowed coals from the fire already lit and soon had his own flames leaping.

By the time his comrades had joined him the flames had died down enough to permit cooking. The trio began the preparation of the evening meal. One boiled coffee. Another fried caribou meat. The third threw flapjacks. Even while Channing and the Factor regarded them, Big Otter, the steersman who had traveled with Channing, came forward to announce supper.

"Um ready," he whined in the high-pitched tone of the Nascaupe. "Hot now. Eat um 'fore um cold."

"Well, I'm ready for it," yawned Channing, stretching his canoe-cramped limbs. "I tell you, Trevor and Lavergne, you're lucky dogs to have your stomachs full and your pipes drawing. When I've satisfied this huge appetite of mine, I'll come and

have a smoke and talk with you and Winona."



THEY understood. He had been so long on the Whale that he had his fill of Indians with limited English vocabularies. He yearned for the speech and companionship of his own kind, and especially for that of Winona.

At supper the Indians squatted a little apart, but he talked to them all the time he ate. Big Otter appeared to be the favored one, but, watching covertly, Lavergne discovered that Raven Wing and Spear-um-Caribou liked and respected him, and this Louis marveled at.

Supper over, Channing filled his pipe and came and sat by the fire between Winona and Ivan. At sight of the dark, straight-cut, handsome features, clear in the red glow, Lavergne's old hate rushed over him again. Channing's face was clean-shaven. He had carried his toilet articles and kept his toilet against the barbaric influence of the wilderness. The very cleanliness of Channing's appearance, in contrast with his own uncouthness, increased Lavergne's resentment. In sullen silence Louis sat back while Winona and Ivan told Channing the things he wanted to know.

The talk ran long. The tawny Nascaupes, silhouetted in their own fire's glow, listened in stoic tranquillity. Pipes were refilled and smoked out again before Channing had his fill of news and of Winona's society. But when the stars began to wheel, the Factor arose with a command for bed, and the girl slipped off with Ayume to her tent.

With movements almost simultaneous, the three Manuan Lake men and Ivan's three paddlers knocked the ashes from their pipes and slid into their blankets. Channing, Lavergne, and the Factor likewise rolled up in front of the fly and the small silk shelter.

A silence enveloped the camp, the intense silence that broods on the edge of the Barren Grounds. Once the stillness was broken. Afar in the darkness a Labrador wolf howled across the wastes.

And overhead pulsated the Aurora of the true North, a tinge of crimson in its bars, a symbol of the Flaming Night to come when the great snows should smother the land.

CHAPTER X

PRIMEVAL DAWN

THE Swampy Bay River is simply a tail of the Kaniapiskau, widening to form Kanachakagama Lake, which is fed by the Nachikapau River flowing from the Big Beaver country. It pours into the Kaniapiskau below Shale Fall, near the point of crossing of the fifty-seventh parallel.

The camps at the Swampy Bay's mouth awoke long before dawn. A genuine Labrador mist of amazing density had gathered in the night. It shrouded both streams. It choked the gorges. It walled the fire round with white, woolly walls that even the heat and draft and smoke could drive back but a little space.

"Thick, eh, Winona?" smiled Channing, who further to enjoy her presence before the start had taken a hand with the breakfast. "Thick enough to slice!" Tentatively he carved the air with the hunting-knife that he was using to whittle sticks on which to roast caribou meat.

"Very thick," agreed the girl, with a shiver at the dampness. "But it will go out when the sun comes."

Channing shook his head dubiously. "I hope so. Yet it doesn't look it. It feels like one of those seven-day fogs. Winona, I've seen land fogs and sea fogs, but I've never seen anything to equal that of the Labrador. It lies on you like a heavy blanket and holds you in one spot."

"Yes, I know, but this is only the morning mist," explained Winona. "The white-frost mist of Fall. It will be raised enough for paddling by the time we finish breakfast. Come! I think things are ready. Father! Louis! Sit in place. And Ayume, will you settle the coffee with a splash of cold river water? It seems extra muddy."

Sitting close to the fire they ate a hurried meal. The parts of their bodies fronting the blaze were warm, but at their backs was a chill, the chill of a fast-approaching change of season.

The Nascaupes, shifting for themselves with little ceremony, since their contract with Channing had ended the night before, noted the change and put their heads together, talking in plaintive whines, with the result that they bolted their food, arose, and glided swiftly about their labors.

Like fantoms in the haze they came and went, striking tents, packing camp utensils, sorting out dunnage. Silently, phlegmatically they worked, squandering no energy, making no wasted movement. Every time one raised an arm, took a step, was so much achieved.

They were taking three of the six dogs. The other three were for Channing, and Big Otter personally picked out and presented him with the finest animals, three giant Eskimo huskies answering to the names of Koowa, Peeten, and Choatuk. Also he supplied the harness for the dogs.

Finally the Nascaupée canoes were launched. These were of birch bark, made in three pieces stripped from large trees. They had long, curved bows and were the product of an expert canoe maker. The skilful ribbing, the faultless sewing, the sound gumming, all showed it.

To Louis Lavergne they looked as if they had come from farther south, from the Montagnais Lands. He asked Big Otter and found that they had. They had got them from a tribe of Montagnais Indians with whom their own tribe had intermarried. They treasured them, too, for trees of a size to yield such bark did not grow in the Barren Grounds.

The Indians' last luggage was stowed amidships. Their dogs were shoved under the thwarts. The fog had already thinned somewhat so that the red tongues of the firelight lapped the water.

"Start now," announced Big Otter, unemotionally.



THEY took in hand paddles which, in accordance with the Indian rule, equaled the users in height, stepped nimbly into the canoes, and drifted away. They paddled as every true-blooded Indian has always paddled, sitting on the insides of their feet, straight-bodied, rigid-elbowed, with a short, quick stroke and the weight of the shoulders thrown forward at the end of the stroke.

With the start their taciturnity enveloped them again. No word of conversation was spoken. Raven Wing and Spear-um-Caribou occupied one craft, Big Otter the other. They were on the long trail once more. Theirs was a race against time.

The destination, Manuan Lake, lay due east almost two hundred miles. The water travel was hard. Frost would come before

they made it. They must continue with the dogs. And once at Manuan Lake they were not finished. It was their custom to winter at Indian House Lake, fifty or sixty miles farther on. There they could make a better struggle in the terrible battle for existence which always commenced at the fall of snow.

When the canoes, clear of the bay, reached the fringe of fog, Channing was touched with a sense of the power and the might that these quiet men had been to him.

"Good-by, Big Otter," he called, with a pang of something like homesickness, but which he could not analyze. "Good-by, Raven Wing. Good-by, Spear-um-Caribou."

"By," they answered.

Round the turn of the promontory the crafts swung wide, drew in to the left, thrust through the curtain of fog, and were gone.

Immediately the Factor's party embarked. In Ivan's long canoe he had had the two women and the two paddlers coming up. Going down he took on the third paddler, who had worked the bow of Lavergne's smaller craft. Thus three Indians paddled in rhythm in the big fur canoe, and two white men timed their strokes in the other. For every Northman knows that the redskin's paddle drive differs materially from that of the white.

Through the twisting vapors they floated down the Kaniapiskau. Speed was essential, not so much for Ivan and his companions as for Channing and Lavergne. By Louis's reckoning it was over one hundred miles to the point where the stream they traveled united with the Larch River to form the broader water called the Koksoak.

How far up the Larch Channing's cache stood Louis did not know. Channing called it thirty or forty miles. They had to make it and return to Canoe Cache before the freeze-up which was imminent. Their traverse, instead of running into weeks, must be a matter of days. For the two great highways of the land, the George River and the Kaniapiskau River, by which men journey north of fifty-three, are early closed.



ACCORDINGLY Lavergne and Channing settled themselves for the effort that would enable them to accomplish their object. Their craft, more

easily handled in the bad water, piloted the way. The Factor's canoe followed. As they proceeded cautiously, the fog lost density, and soon, clear, cold, brilliant, like a pure canary diamond, the sun burst through. The water smoked in the morning glare. The white frost which smeared the shores swept along like a ground fire. Boulder-strewn, the river margin rose from the haze, black as the iron rim of a boiling caldron. Above the river margin jutted the ridges, and above the ridges loomed the tablelands.

Before them was the day and the evil thereof. They found it sufficient. The Kaniapiskau turned and writhed till the river miles outdistanced and nearly doubled the miles as the raven flies. Straight-water paddling they had in places where they flew with the current, but more often their progress was a farcical attempt at canoeing. Shallows, narrows, boulders, rapids, waterfalls impeded and broke their course. The Kaniapiskau was what sportsmen call a fast-flowing trout stream, the worst stream in the world for canoe travel.

The women walked round all these obstructions; the men fought through and staggered over them. When, having expended energy enough for a full day they paddled ashore at noon, they had reached the mouth of a small tributary, the outlet of one of the shallow, nameless lakes that dotted the Barrens.

A short rest after the noon meal, and they were off again. It was growing colder all the while. There was no time to lose.

As before, Lavergne's craft led the way. As before, Channing knelt in the bow, his rifle leaning against the prow in front of him, his pistol lying in the canoe bottom by his legs. Both were so placed on the chance of seeing game.

But game seemed scarce. Not a sign of any did they see all afternoon. The afternoon was a repetition of the morning, save that they suffered the additional handicap of increasing fatigue.

Barriers of the same degree of impassability as those they had already surmounted demanded for their overcoming greater effort than that expended in the first half of the day, and it was a party of tired voyagers that drew craft out of the river below the Magapana at evening.

Immediately after supper Winona and Ayume disappeared into their tent. Channing sat by the fire, waiting with an air of

expectancy and glancing incessantly toward the girl's shelter, but he waited in vain.

And Lavergne lay awake half the night pondering with savage joy on the reason for Winona's aloofness.

Was it fatigue?

Or was it something deeper?

CHAPTER XI

THE HAND OF THE ARCTIC FUR COMPANY

AROUND the Factor's party as they pushed northward, the country began to change in character. Ridges lost roundness of contour and chiseled the sky. Sparse alder and willow gave way to juniper and maiden birch, and the dwarf birch yielded in turn to the ragged spruce. The Kaniapiskau leaped on its wild, drunken career. The boulders which cobbled its banks grew huge, enormous, ice-worn balls.

From small lakes to east and west late loons cried. Their diving alone broke the surface, for Canada geese and black ducks were gone. Only the ravens, croaking aloft in flocks, remained, and the solitary ospreys, circling the crags as they worked south. Bird life had accepted warning and obeyed instinct to save itself in the sunlands, but these humans who accepted no warning and obeyed no instinct faced north.

In their journey no untoward incident happened till the day upon which they drew near Canoe Cache. They had camped the preceding evening eight miles below it and broken camp at an unearthly hour of the morning in order that for both parties the Cache might mark the starting-point, so to speak, of a full day's traverse.

Lavergne and Channing were paddling fast and scouting a mile or two ahead of the others in the hope of killing fresh meat. Slipping into their pack straps at the beginning of a long *portage*, they sighted a bull caribou crossing the stream below them.

Channing, being nearest it, seized his rifle and took a snap shot. There was only a second's time for the aim, and Lavergne expected to see the animal bound off untouched, but Channing proved to be no ordinary marksman. His bullet struck somewhere in the flank. The caribou fell on its haunches, in the thicket, struggled up, and crashed away.

Koowa, Peeten, and Choatuk, the wolf

dogs, started to give chase. Louis kicked them back. He feared they might follow too far and get lost.

"That's right," commended Channing. "Don't let them away. I can get him myself while you make the *portage*."

Louis hoped he would get the caribou. Fresh meat would be very acceptable for the dash to the Larch River. He passed a thong round the huskies' necks in order to make sure of them and set about crossing the *portage*.

He carried his own packs safely across, but as he shouldered Channing's dunnage and went bobbing over the rough trail, his moccasin slipped on a wet boulder and his burden rolled down the rocks. The mouth of the bag flew open and Channing's leather roll, in which he kept his toilet articles, scattered its contents all over the *portage*.

Louis made shift to rescue these, for he knew how Channing prized the things. He took the case and collected the contents, carefully putting into their different compartments the razor, brush, comb, soap, and such like. But when he started to roll the affair up, a sheet of paper fell from a slit in the lining.



AT FIRST Louis took it for a scrap of shaving-paper and did not bother to lift it, but then he saw the letters "Arctic Fur Company" on the back. Idly he pulled the sheet open, expecting to see a price list of pelts such as they had often sent him from the south in the old days of his trapping with François Lavergne. Yet idle curiosity was instantly replaced by astonishment.

No price list, but a document, a memorandum!

Breathlessly Louis read it. He had no sense of shame in doing so. The necessity that he, in the service of the Hudson's Bay Company, should learn everything possible about the rival Arctic Fur Company submerged the ethical question of right or wrong in his action. And he did learn and laughed aloud to the silent places as he comprehended.

Channing a geologist? Yes, in furs! Channing an explorer? Yes, for Winter posts! That document showed that, instead of being in the Canadian Government's service, Channing was in Monroe's service and with Monroe's money was behind the Arctic Fur Company. It showed he was

the Arctic Fur Company, body, soul, and incorporation.

Nor was he leaving the extension of trade to hirelings. He undertook it himself. He did not depend for success on the brains and aggressiveness of others. He depended on himself. Here was the record of what he had accomplished in the last four years, here the chain of Northland posts he had established or projected.

What a vast system he had instituted! A year in the Hudson's Bay district. A year in the MacKenzie Basin. A year in the Yukon. And the fourth year in the Labrador.

Lavergne almost envied him. He had formed a mammoth trust, wide enough in scope to give serious rivalry to the Hudson's Bay Company, which was in itself the most Titanic combine the world ever saw. Well might Ivan Trevor, with the foe already on his ground, first tremble over this and then flame into anger and sharpen his wits for the victory.

What Channing had done in that year in the Labrador might never be undone. Ivan had held the dead Channing as a worthy enemy, but the son of the dead man was a far more worthy one.

But the Factor would not know yet, Louis vowed, as he smiled grimly to himself! He held the whip hand, and he had a swift vision of how he would use it. He pondered gloatingly over the paper till Channing's halloo came out of the spruce with startling effect. Channing was shouting for the position of the *portage*, for the thick growth hid the river from his view.

"Halloo!" he yelled repeatedly. "Halloo! Halloo, the *portage*! Wake up, Lavergne! Above or below?"

"Below!" Lavergne answered. "Away below!"

For the caribou chase had taken him a long distance down-river.

Louis hastily replaced the paper in the toilet case and returned the case to the dunnage bag. Channing would be quick to miss it and quicker to use his ready weapons. He had to separate Channing from those weapons before the record could be touched.



AS LOUIS smoked and waited on the end of the *portage*, he wondered whether Channing carried that toilet case because of his regard for his personal

appearance or because it made an innocent hiding-place for private papers. In the ordinary course of things the document was safer there than on Channing's person, since he had to come in contact with many unscrupulous Factors who, if suspicious of him, would not hesitate to have him searched.

In a few minutes the owner of the document appeared, panting from his run.

"Get him?" asked Lavergne stoically.

Channing shook his head. "Hit him heavy, too. Blood at every jump. But he's going yet. Others pass you?"

"No. We better get a swing on if we're to keep ahead."

As always, Channing was in the bow. In its customary position his rifle leaned against the prow before him. In the usual place his pistol lay at his knees on the canoe bottom. The river was quiet. No more game turned from its drinking, and the hush between the shore growths of spruce was like cathedral calm.

They approached the mouth of Mata-kami Creek, above which lay Canoe Cache, and entered a stretch of still water in a crescent bend, water so transparent that it looked only half its real depth to the round stones in its bed.

In the belly of the crescent Lavergne thrust deep with his paddle. A sudden twist of it, blade-on to the surface, a touch of his knee to the gunwale, and the canoe was upside down.

Men and dogs floundered ashore through five feet of ice-cold water. Their craft drifted against the bank. Channing held only his paddle. His weapons were at the bottom of the river.

In the plunge he had not uttered a syllable.

Not a splutter passed his lips when they waded out.

CHAPTER XII

FERINE BLOOD

THE moment they emerged their clothes began freezing, and they dashed impetuously at the spruce branches that overhung the bank. Tearing them away in great armfuls they heaped them up. Fire sprang from the matches which Lavergne always carried stuck in his hat band. They stripped off their stiffening garments and, naked

as gods in the golden Autumn sunlight, leaned over the blaze.

Cave men they might have been, and the huskies wormed forward on their bellies to the fire, just as did the first wolf dogs when the world was young. Channing was stooping, hands outstretched to the flames, every muscle of his magnificent body showing. He had his head bent to shield his eyes from the fierce heat.

So intent was he on getting that same heat into his marrow that he failed to look at Louis. Not a word had he spoken. Nor did Louis speak. He awaited the other's reprimand.

All at once Channing looked up and broke silence.

"You fool!" he flashed. "And the Factor said just the other night that you were the best canoeman in the North!"

"He spoke the truth, if I do say it myself," Lavergne countered. "That paddle stroke proves it."

"What the deuce do you mean? You did that purposely?"

"I wanted to separate you from your rifle and pistol."

"Well, you've done it. You know where they are. If they're any good to you go and dive for them."

"I don't need to. I know another way."

Still naked, Lavergne went down the shore, righted the canoe and emptied it of water. The packs, as usual, were lashed to the thwarts, which had prevented their drifting away. His own revolver, taken from the pocket of his wet coat, Louis threw into the canoe and seized the long steel gaff that he had used on namaycush, gigantic lake trout, which he had caught during the journey up-river.

Like a naked savage he put out to mid-channel, easily locating what he sought in the clear, quiet flow. Channing's pistol lay on the flat rock that paved part of the river bed. His rifle was wedged between two round stones.

Louis dipped an arm overside, hooked the gaff in the trigger guards, pulled the weapons up and paddled ashore. There, using his clasp knife as a screwdriver, he took the hammers from both rifle and pistol, leaving them useless until he chose to replace the missing parts.

Channing squatted sullenly before the fire. He made no comment on Lavergne's actions. He did not think for an instant

that Louis had discovered his real mission. He vaguely sensed a conflict with him on Winona's account, but he could not see, puzzle as he might, what Lavergne would gain in a clash, with the Factor's canoe coming on any minute.



THE movements of Louis were not at all ambiguous. When he came up beside the fire he reached out and removed Channing's hunting-knife from the belt that looped his drying trousers hung on a stick before the blaze.

"It's less dangerous with me," Lavergne observed.

Instinctively Channing made a movement as if to prevent, but he saw the pistol in Lavergne's hand and squatted back by the fire.

"And this?" Louis added, catching up the toilet case from Channing's dunnage bag.

Channing leaped upright.

"Drop that," he commanded furiously.

His face was flushed a dark red, and the backward motion of his clenched fists at the level of his armpits shoved the barrel chest forward and bunched the thick biceps.

"I need the razor," laughed Louis, "also the Arctic Fur record."

As if painted out by a white brush, the crimson left Channing's cheeks. He gazed, startled, bewildered, for an instant. Then the blood came back with a violent surge, flooding face and neck and upper breast.

"You devilish spy!" he bellowed, and rushed like a bull.

Blindly he came, all his Southern control and veneer forgotten and shed, the incarnation of strength, ignoring the weapon in Lavergne's hand, every muscle drawing tense, slipping and sliding like snakes beneath the white skin.

And the might of his savage spirit struck on Lavergne's, as flint on steel. Fire flew, and the brute in Louis sprang out to meet the coming brute.

He threw away the pistol in his hand, and the two butted shoulder to shoulder and chest to chest, their arms grappling, their heads locking like wrestlers' heads. The impact of his flesh on Channing's was fierce, insane joy to Lavergne.

Battle riotous rose within him, made him crush, tear, and clench. And the wonderful strength of Channing to withstand, to rock,

to rage, and to inflict agonies with the power of his pressure but made the joy fiercer.

No finesse! No trick! No artifice!

They did not think. They were beyond themselves. Their intellects had ceased to direct, and primitive fury was all that arranged attack and set defense. Enemies of primeval times they were, cave men, prehistoric foes.

Beast against beast, they struggled in the wilderness depths, struggled with only the main strength of themselves. No hold of the mats was used. All holds, toe holds, leg holds, reverse body holds, hammerlocks, full and half Nelsons, all known grips were one—the grip of their arms.

Lavergne's back was to the fire, and behind his back the dogs arose and gathered in a half circle, tense and silent, waiting, as if the battle had been between members of their own kind, for the weaker adversary to go down. But Louis was not conscious of their sinister attitude. The only thing he was conscious of was the stamping of his own and Channing's knotted legs, the straining of their hairy bodies, the twist and slip of biceps, and the writhe and heave of deltoids. Time and place vanished, and it became a conflict in a great void where he and Channing were doomed to battle through eternity, the one never weakening, the other never gaining. But in the midst of this distorted imagining Louis felt Channing's breath go from him with a choking sound, felt his barrel chest sink limply.



CHANNING'S body sagged and fell on the rocks, his consciousness crushed out by his antagonist's sheer power.

Instantly, according to their custom, the dogs leaped upon the fallen. So swift they sprang that the unthinking Lavergne had barely time to seize a burning limb and meet the charge. They were wild for what they deemed their legitimate prey. Their fangs clicked. The slaver streaked their jaws. But Louis ground the burning limb into those very jaws, and they retreated howling. Their primitive voices struck a responsive chord in Lavergne. The primal earthsong rang triumphant through his soul, the same old earthsong that has thrilled animals and men from the beginning, the aboriginal cry which has run through all scales from the howl of the

first wolf pack to Apollo's pæan and from Apollo's pæan to the battle hymn of nations.

It was the stark exposing of the primitive. Lavergne was the man primitive. He rejoiced because he was the ferine conqueror, the more brutish brute.

In the midst of his exultation, like the cry of the cave man's mate, Winona's voice echoed through the shore thicket.

"Halloo!" she called. "It's not near dinner hour yet. What are you doing there with a fire?"

For though the spruce screened the blaze and the two men about the blaze, the Factor's party had marked the spiral of smoke above the tree tops.

"We had a spill," Lavergne shouted, "and we're just drying off."

"Well, hurry and give us good-by at Canoe Cache," was Winona's command. "It's not far up, you know."

When the other canoe had passed, Louis went down to the river, drew a pail of water, and dashed it over Channing.

The latter arose, dazed and sullen.

"Throw your clothes on," Lavergne ordered.

And hardly giving the disgruntled man time to arrange the half dry garments aright, he hurried him into the craft beside the dogs that had attempted to feast on him and pushed on to Canoe Cache.



CANOE CACHE was no more than a little clearing on the river bank.

In the clearing some of the stumps had been left twelve feet long. To the tops of every four stumps poles were lashed in the form of a rectangle. Upon these supports it was the custom to store the canoes when not in use. Thus the crafts reposed upside down, protected by a tarpaulin lashed over them, impervious to the weather and beyond danger of being crushed by falling trees.

On the pole platforms dunnage was also cached when necessary, and sometimes food, but the Factor's party had only their canoe to leave, and it was raised to position when Channing and Lavergne came along. The Factor's Indians, packing their burdens with tump lines, were already filing off on the hardly discernible trail their comrades had left. Ayume pottered after them. Ivan and Winona reached hands of farewell across the gunwale to the two bound for the Larch.

"Safe water and open water—aye, and swift paddles, that's what I am wishing you," was the Factor's good-by. "We will be seeing you at Lake No-Lake before the week runs out."

"And no more cold baths, I hope!" smiled Winona, her firm, slender fingers pressing Channing's somewhat limp hand. "You look as if that one had taken all the spirit out of you."

"Well—it wasn't, to say, invigorating," replied Channing slowly, stealing an uneasy glance at the stoic Louis. "It's a bad omen for a start, and the season's mighty late. Say, do you know, I've half a mind to let the cache on the Larch stand for the present and go on with you now."

Whereat Lavergne emitted a vicious laugh, and his face lighted with a wicked glow. "Eh? You say so?" he dared. "All right, it doesn't make a scrap of difference to me!"

With apparent unconcern Louis rose from the thwart as if to step ashore. Channing read the menace in his tone and hastily put a hand out to stop him.

"Hold on," he growled. "That's not a decision. It's only a notion."

His manner was disconcerted, almost alarmed, and the quick eye of Ivan Trevor noted it.

"Man, is that the trouble?" he cried. "You and Louis have been having words? But that is easily remedied. Just say so and one of my paddlers travels with you instead of Louis!"

At Ivan's option Channing saw with a flash of revelation what his companion had gained by the *coup* near Matakami.



THE choice was Channing's. Either a lone journey, unarmed, with a man whose savage intent could not be doubted, or instant exposure before the Factor! The issue that would end abruptly in one blazing moment, or the issue that would hang fire for an indefinite period! One he had to accept, and swiftly he accepted that of procrastination.

"Oh, Louis is a good enough canoeman for me," he announced, thrusting in his paddle and driving the canoe away from shore as if fearful that something unforeseen should intervene to destroy what grace he had won. "There's no use changing. Good-by! Till the end of the week!"

Lavergne flashed back a smile that showed his white teeth as he caught the time of the stroke. "Or till the end of the month!" he darkly amended.

"No, no," cried Winona, pausing an instant before she disappeared on the inland trail, "don't get caught with the frost, Louis!"

With the passing of the Factor's party the verity of desolation sank upon the two lone voyagers. By the strength of numbers, by the artificial devices of several pitched camps, they had for a little time shattered the oppression of the Barrens' silence. They had created the illusion of human superiority over the wilderness forces. But now that illusion faded. Two were not enough to give the strength of numbers. The wild North, inimical, supreme, crowded close, jostled them, and grinned a challenge. Well did they know that the comforts of fire and roof would not be given them generously as they needed. Day by day they would have to win them from their silent adversary.

CHAPTER XIII

THE SHORES OF SURVIVAL

THUS striving like giants, Channing and Lavergne fought down the Kaniapiskau to the mouth of the Larch River and up the Larch to Channing's cache, where Louis enriched himself with precious records which matched the one found in the toilet case. Back down the Larch to its mouth and up the Kaniapiskau to Manitou Gorge they won, but the frost caught them at Limestone Fall.

No more could they launch their craft through the rim ice. The Kaniapiskau froze from shore to shore in a single night. The useless canoe was suspended bottom-up between two spruces, to be recovered in the Spring. A temporary camp was made, a camp that would endure for a time, waiting the whim of the coming snow.

From the hour Lavergne had proved himself Channing's master, Channing developed a sullen mood, and day by day that mood darkened. He took on the aspects of their surroundings—gray indifference, silence. But he committed no overt act. Lavergne's wariness was the reason. His were the gifts of the trained woodsman, seeing everything without focusing the gaze, reading

movements, signs, and thoughts, sleeping like a cat.

Waking or sleeping, he gave Channing no opportunity, although under his taciturnity Channing wished and watched and waited for it. As was the attitude of the North to both men, so was the attitude of each to the other, bitter, unyielding, circumspect.

All about them the waste land hardened to iron. The march of the frost bridged the swamps, entombed the lakes. Tenfold deeper grew the desolation, the utter suspension of sound within that vast wilderness.

Even the waterfalls whose thundering had been a welcome at their approach were still. Like huge centipedes they sprawled with icy legs upon the frozen pools beneath. Immovable as if carved from white marble were those pools that had lately danced and frothed, and what little water dribbled below dribbled noiselessly.

As a rule, in the Labrador the snows are deep toward the end of September, but they are not generally used, since the surface is not solid enough for dog teams. Yet Lavergne planned to use the first snowfall.

Soft as it might be in the vicinity of their camp, it would do for a start and serve them as they wound through the valley of the Kaniapiskau up to the interior tableland where it would be wind-packed to suit the heart of any dog driver.



THE dogs and harness were ready. There remained to prepare the sled, snowshoes, and meat for men and huskies. Game was exceedingly scarce and, Channing being without arms, the hunting had to be done by Louis. He hunted hard, but a few ptarmigan was all he got during those steely Autumn days.

However, after many nights of rending frost came a sprinkle of snow which gave tracking, and Lavergne was lucky enough to find the track of a stray caribou which he trailed down and shot. The meat was dried and the skin roughly tanned.

With the hides the men lined their coats, caps, and moccasins for greater warmth. What was left of these hides went into the webbing of snowshoes, fashioned from tamarack strips, and into the binding of the joints of the sledge, which was built of spruce.

The snowshoes were of the long-tail variety. The sledge was low and light.

Such toil filled the waiting days and made bearable the long evenings. Never once did Louis threaten his companion. Never once did he give any hint of his intention toward him.

According to all appearances, he was doing his best to get him across the snows to Lake No-Lake with as much despatch as possible, yet at heart Channing was troubled under his sullen mask.

While the nights lengthened the days inevitably shortened. The solar path began to shift so that each dawn broke farther south of the fixed east. The men watched the shift. They watched each other. They watched for snow.

And as if their watching drew the storm, it fell howling at the close of a blustery afternoon. All night a terrific gale rocked the camp, pelting the stinging drift like hail. All the next day it raged, and another and yet another! Then the heavens showed brittle, cold and clear. The wind had packed the snow solid. The frost was intense.

This was the waiting men's chance. By the light of the brilliant stars they started, hours before sunrise. It was wise to get out of the forested strip before another storm blocked the way.

There was no gee pole on the sledge, and the huskies were not harnessed in single-pack harness as is the custom in the MacKenzie country and in the Yukon. The sled was used after the fashion of an Eskimo *komatik*.

To the front of it was attached a long thong or bridle, and from the end of this thong other thongs or traces, of different lengths, so as not to cause interference, ran to the dogs' collars. This arrangement the rough, bouldered valleys of the Labrador make necessary.

Driving the huskies with a long whip made of twisted hide, they left the silent, sealed river and headed into the silent, sealed hinterland. Above, below, behind, before was silence, awe-inspiring, deadly. The commotion they aroused in passing, dog pant, snowshoe crunch, sled creak, echoed faintly in the interminable void, struck weakly as the rustle of a falling leaf upon the forest's calm.

As they quitted the spot which had been their temporary abode and forged on where was no abode, where was nothing but the snow, the sky, and the cold, the spirit of

the wild asserted itself. They had the impression that amid the white loneliness they were not alone. A presence, vague, inimical, strong, was out against them.

The foe they had defied, whose fuel they had burned, whose meat they had plundered, whose waters they had trespassed, was at last arisen. That foe was giving a hint of its might. Thus far, victory was in their grasp. They had fought their way well and carefully and used their weapons of wilderness craft with skill.

But now the bitter Winter was come, and he who journeys the Barrens in Winter sets himself a Titanic task. For every mile of the waste has to be literally won. Before winning each mile, it is necessary to thrust back the grim, unseen antagonist.



NOW to Channing and Lavergne were thrown no gifts, tendered no concessions. Fire and food had still to be wrested from a formidable enemy, and the enemy had girded on its mail. Snow, frost, storm, wind, silence, desolation, day gloom, night flame—these were the weapons and the armor of the North.

Crawling upward from the hundred-foot benchland to the five-hundred-foot tableland, the sun struck them across the level snows. Before its strong rays the stars went out, quivering in the frost haze which bulked gigantic on the low horizon. Straight and even-branched, and leaping into focus from uncertain silhouettes, the spruces fringed the waste. Daylight looked upon a brumal world.

And how different a world from that through which Louis had journeyed weeks ago on paddling from Nichikun Lake to Fort Chimo! Then it was a world of riotous vegetation, of prodigal bloom, of droning insects, calling birds, winnowing butterflies, and the warm gliding of rivers.

For with the suddenness of birth Summer springs from the womb of the Labrador. July suns eat the snows and spew the floods. July days stain the hillsides with millions of ripened berries and scatter strange, rare flowers through the valleys.

Geese, ducks, loons, and other waterfowl float downy broods upon the waterways. The osprey leads the young hawk through the air. The ptarmigan scurries, a gray shadow trailed by little gray shadows, in the thick cover.

Abroad in the land forage the Arctic fox,

the black fox, the lynx, the wolf, the bear, all ravenous, all predatory, seekers after the weaker lives. For the beast who was stronger survived. The one weaker fell. Thus the iron country worked out its iron course of natural selection, called its chosen, standardized its strain.

Also by Summer moved the herds of caribou, thousands strong, in annual migration. Upon them fell the Nascaupes and Montagnais, taking toll of the baser breed that man, the nobler, might live.

So now the climax of the test which the Labrador put to its animal inhabitants and to the men who dared to range its vastness was at hand. Here was the season that thrust crises upon all living things, the Winter, the final lash to smite down the frail.

From the Height of Land to Ungava Bay would be waged a battle for existence. From Hamilton Inlet to the East Main would the conflict spread. Far and near and everywhere the tents of men would be the tents of travail.

Down around Lake Michikamau the Montagnais tribes, beaten in a hard fight, might have to send their young hunters tramping to Davis Inlet on the Atlantic for toboggan loads of supplies to tide them over till Spring. On the shores of Indian House Lake a terrific struggle for the bare necessities of life was certain. The gorging Summer of those Nascaupes could but make surer the starving Winter.

No man would know the anguish of it. On all sides the Barren Grounds shut them in. No man would know till the rivers broke and the ice reeled out whether the tribe or famine had won, whether they stood on shaky legs to recuperate in the plenteous July and August months or lay starved in their rotting tepees.



NOR these alone! Farther north, granting their recovery from sickness, the Nascaupes of the upper Barrens must wage the eternal war against Nature for a Winter's sustenance. By Lake No-Lake the inevitable contest must arise. There the chances might be on the side of the Indians, for Chakoni had declared their caches were full.

To Ivan Trevor, too, when he went back to Chimo, the bitter strife might reach and he would perhaps be clamoring to the Eskimos for seal meat.

And finally, as to every man within the wide Northland, this issue was coming to Seton Channing. This fight for life was coming, this tremendous struggle to remain in the ranks of the strong.

CHAPTER XIV

THE DANGER CHANCE

A HINT of its coming was given Channing when after the noon halt on the plateau Lavergne failed to call the dogs for a start.

"Better be moving, hadn't we?" he asked, as he put his pipe away.

"Wait," Louis replied stoically.

Again, a little later, he made the same proposition and received answer in the same manner.

"Aren't we mushing any more to-day?" he demanded in half an hour.

"No," Lavergne told him.

"Then why did you pull out hours before sunrise if you're quitting hours before sunset?"

"Because I didn't know how soon what I'm waiting for would come. Don't you see that haze making on the horizon?"

Channing looked at the frosty clouds. He looked at Louis. Without saying anything he pitched his silk fly. Close to the fire he staked it on a slant to catch and deflect the heat down upon the sleeping-place beneath.

He kicked up a drift to bank the back, threw himself at full length in the warmth, and drew out his pipe again, smoking moodily. There was nothing else to do. Lavergne did not unlash his packs from the sled. According to the pace of the rolling snow smoke in the sky, he would not need to.

They lay and stared across the white immensities, rising occasionally to root in the crust for dwarfed shrubs and broken branches for the fire. The knife-edged cold abated somewhat. A dampness blew from the purple east. The glazed sun sank in the early afternoon, sending eery shadows creeping along the waste.

And while supper was being eaten big flakes swung down and splashed on the coals of the fire.

"Storm!" exclaimed Channing.

Lavergne smiled grimly. "What I have been waiting on," he observed.

He arose and put the harness on the dogs. Koowa, the lead dog, who had a surly temper, gave him a vicious five minutes, but at last the animal was flayed and kicked into submission.

For gentle words and caressing hands must not be used on a husky. Who does so only smoothes his path to the fang death.

It was against the lead dog's instinct to be haled out for the trail at fall of night, but Louis was not to be denied. Peeten, the second dog, was shrewd enough to see the example made of Koowa, while Choatuk the sledge-dog, wisest of the three, gazed at Lavergne with sagacity and sidled around to let him fasten up the thongs. Louis then turned the sled on its side to anchor it a moment.



HIS deliberate actions slowly fanned Channing's anger.

"You pick funny hours for travel," he sneered, sitting up. "Now I suppose you'll tell me we're going on to Lake No-Lake."

Lavergne took two or three strides and sat down facing him, upon the upturned copper pail beside the fire. He could read Channing's eyes. Channing could read his.

"I'm going on," Louis told him. "You can go where you please. Toward both Winona and the Company you've been a traitor and a devilish rogue!"

The flame of desperate rage leaped into Channing's face. He seized a burning limb at the fire's edge and made as if to dash it in Lavergne's teeth, but Louis slipped off his seat and swung the copper pail in readiness.

"Put it down," he advised. "Remember that other day."

With his flaring anger darkening to a stubborn red in his cheeks, Channing threw away the brand. It fell in the snow and hissed till more snow falling smothered it.

"That's about all I have to say to you," observed Louis. "Have you anything to say to me?"

"Only that you're a cursed murderer!"

"I haven't laid a hand on you."

"But my Heaven, Lavergne, it's the same thing!"

"Not quite! Only I'm making sure you'll never get to Lake No-Lake. You don't know the position of it from here, and you might as well try to find a single rock in the Barrens as try to find it.

"Go back to the Whale the way you came. If you are half the explorer you pretend to be you'll make Manuan Lake. I'm giving you the danger chance of the *Longue Traverse*. And not as most factors of the North are apt to give it—without food or arms!

"I've divided the food. That topmost pack on the sledge is yours, provisions, weapons, ammunition, everything that I have. The hammers of the guns aren't in place, but you can easily attend to that after I'm gone. But don't think I'm giving them for nothing. Those Arctic Fur documents just about pay for them."

Louis arose abruptly, strode to the sledge, threw Channing's pack off and started.

Losing his trail as quickly as it was broken, he went forth from the ring of fire-light. Great flakes beat upon his face and upon the huskies' faces like the wet wings of birds. Two hundred yards away he glanced back through the blur.

An orange stain on snow and fly, the fire glowed.

Beneath the fly Channing lay motionless.

A quarter of a mile Lavergne traveled before striking a convolution on the surface of the plateau. Swinging across it he stared back. The shoulder of the land shut out the fire. Darkness and driving storm intervened.

CHAPTER XV

THE PLACE OF PLAGUE

SQUAT and low and dully phosphorescent from fires within, the Nascaupée winter encampments blurred up across the snows. Lavergne had held an unswerving course as true as the compass course. For if you strike a line across the Labrador from the mouth of the Nastapoka River on Hudson's Bay to the mouth of North River on the Atlantic seaboard, that line will pass, first through the vicinity of Limestone Fall on the Kaniapiskau, and second through Lake No-Lake.

The timber on the north shore of the Lake gave the encampments shelter, gave them an excuse for being, and, huddled in the lee, the tepees crouched from the sweep of storms. Snow-banked half way up the sides, they were for more warmth. Of the smaller ones, little but the poles stuck out of the drifts. They seemed akin to the

enshrouded tufts of reeds which jutted forth from the shallows of the lake.

This very shallowness had named the long, straggling body of water that lies in the Barrens east of the Kaniapiskau. It is narrow in parts, lacks depth off every point, and is full of bars which almost touch the surface. A curse on canoes and the prey of gales is Lake No-Lake, tomb for the white man and the Nascaupée alike.

Now ice-bound, drift-laden, its creaming waves could not crash over the sullen, black bars or cannonade against the scarred margin. Yet in the unfamiliar stillness, the Arctic desolation, Lavergne felt a menace deeper than that which comes with wind and bluster. Horror of cold and barrenness was over the land.

Nor did warm welcome greet him from the tents as he neared them. Only for the fire glow that shone brightly through the deerskins in the dark, the tepees might have been uninhabited. The biting frost held tight each three-cornered door flap. No head peered forth at his advance.

It looked as if Ivan Trevor and Winona and the rest had finished their mission, while he and Channing were waiting for snow on the frozen Kaniapiskau, and gone back to Chimo. Louis, with a pang of disappointment, stopped before the large central tepee, the tepee of Booming Thunder, the old chief, and, stooping double, slipped under the door-covering.

There his eager eyes saw with joy, not Booming Thunder and his men sitting smoking before the fire, but Winona, Ivan, Ballard and Newell still in the act of ministering to the sick. So intent were they upon their duties that they had not heard him enter. But when he took another stride, it was old Ivan's ears that first caught the creak of his frosted shoe-packs.

The Factor turned. From one pocket of his *parka* protruded his pipe, from the other pocket his Proverbs. His hands were full of medical accessories, but these he dropped suddenly as he sprang forward and to Lavergne's bewilderment fell on his neck and blessed him.

"God be thankit, man!" he exclaimed. "God be thankit!"



HIS care-lined face and the pinched, worn faces of the others crowding after shone with relief. Their mingled voices made a Babel which rattled

strangely amid the sighs and mutterings of the sick.

With the Factor, Ballard the huge Viking was bellowing questions. The Chaplain was moving his lips as in benediction. While, because she was the center of all to him, Winona's words alone became distinct.

"Oh, how I've prayed for this, Louis!" she cried. "Prayed you wouldn't be delayed too long! Yes, agonized in prayer for it! I even think I sent my soul a little way after my prayers. I knew you'd answer them—and answer me." With her old movement, the mannerism he loved so well, she seized his hands.

But old Ivan cut in: "Yes, yes; losh, yes! Yet it's queer thanksgivers we will be proving ourselves. Raving here warm while our benefactors shiver with the frost. Call Channing in, Louis, and get up to the fire."

"Eh? Channing did not come."

"Why, Louis? He could not face the Barrens? He went on to Chimo from the Larch?" questioned the Factor.

"Not altogether that!" evaded Lavergne. "I'll explain to you later. But tell me, what's the cause of all this uneasiness? I scent something wrong, but I can't define it."

"You have meat?" Winona ventured, a confident look on her wan face. "You're such a good hunter, Louis! You must have much meat!"

"Only a few pounds!" he answered.

"Didn't you get any game?" demanded Surgeon Ballard.

"One caribou. It had to feed two men and three dogs for quite a space of time. There are maybe thirty pounds or so left. But why? For Heaven's sake, Ballard, don't tell me you're in need!"

The dart of fear struck him at the mere idea—fear not for these sturdy men but for Winona. He gazed at her. Surgeon Ballard's eyes followed his. And under the scrutiny and under her fallen hopes Winona broke down all at once.

She leaned against the skin partition of the great tepee, her face hidden in her hands, her bosom heaving with spasmodic sobs.

Ballard paused without saying the words upon his lips. He flung up a hand in lieu of speech and hurried back to the Nascaupée he had left.

CHAPTER XVI

THE FACE OF FAMINE

LAVERGNE watched Ballard bend over the patient. He felt the Nascaupée's pulse and straightened up. His strong features showed gloomy in the smoky light. His finger beckoned Newell.

"Dying," Louis heard him whisper to the Chaplain as the latter passed down between the rows of rabbitskin couches and stopped at the third from the end.

For the couches were arranged on each side of the central aisle which held two big sheet-iron Hudson's Bay stoves. They numbered twenty, and the sight of the misery upon them was only a hint of the greater misery to come.

Here were helpless wrecks who could not survive. They would fade out one by one, and one by one would come the rotten recruits tottering from other tepees to fill the empty places.

Ballard was the general who led the battle against the plague. He was the pivot upon which the relief system turned. Though the others were martyring themselves, it was Ballard who supported them in martyrdom.

Now he was soothing the dying Nascaupée while Chaplain Newell administered the last rites. At the Chaplain's solemn intonation Winona gave a cry and stumbled inside the partitioned end of the tent.

Lavergne trembled. He had a vision of the grief she would hide. But his vision was dispelled by the death rattle in the Nascaupée's throat. Louis saw only the smoky interior, the rows of sufferers, the Surgeon and the Chaplain at the farther end, and close before him the old Factor.

"Ayume's next," Ivan muttered, pointing to the last couch against the wall. "Ballard says she can not be surviving another day."

"Ayume!" Lavergne started. "Then it must be catching. You all swore——"

"Hold, man, hold! It is not catching. She is an ancient woman. It has been the plight of her people, and the strain, and all.

"Her death be upon my head, Louis, and many another death that will be coming after! 'Fore Heaven, what a fool I've been! Everything is my fault. I was in authority, and I used the vilest of judgments."

"How?" Lavergne demanded. "Don't waste words. Tell me, in Heaven's name, what has happened."

"I gave an order, Louis. I gave it in good faith, but nevertheless I gave it. You understand we caught Ballard and the paddlers who packed the stuff ten miles in on the trail from Canoe Cache. Well, when we reached here and saw what a task was before us, we debated. Surgeon Ballard said it would be taking the whole Winter to stamp out the sickness and get what was left of the Nascaupes upon their feet. So we held council, and syne we decided to stay the Winter and go back to the Fort in the Spring. The crews took that word and returned before the freeze-up."



"WE DIDN'T see anything of them on the Kaniapiskau."

"They would pass, I have calculated, while you were up the Larch."

"And they are coming for you?"

"When the Koksoak and the Kaniapiskau Rivers break in the Spring."

"Well, there's nothing wrong with that arrangement, is there? I don't understand all this flurry. Ballard led me to believe you're in want. But that can't be. Even if what food you brought in from Chimo is done, there are still thousands of pounds of meat in the Nascaupe caches."

"There is not a pound!"

"Not a *what*?"

"Not a pound!"

"But, Ivan, Chakoni saw them filled."

"Aye, and none saw them emptied. They were sick men when they built. That is why they did not build well. That is why the hungry brutes of the land broke in."

"Have I told enough, Louis? Foxes, wolves, and other starving things! You know what they can do. You have lost caches yourself. And God forgie my hasty word. I should have seen about the meat before I sent away the crews. In the hurry and all I didn't."

"I relied on Chakoni's tale, Chakoni who neffer failed me. Now all has failed me, for we will neffer be seeing the beard of a Chimo man till Spring."

Lavergne replied nothing, but he drew Ivan to the door flap. Outside in the snow, Koowa, Peeten, and Choatuk, the sledge dogs, whined at the men.

"God help me!" exclaimed Ivan. "I was forgetting the dogs. We were all forgetting

the dogs. What have we done with our wits?"

He pounded his forehead and denounced his stupidity. "They're life, Louis, life," he kept repeating.

"Yes, they're life," Lavergne agreed. "They can take a message to Fort Chimo over the Barrens where a man can't go afoot. They're not likely to stray, but we won't risk it. We'll shut them up. Where's an empty tepee?"

Ivan led off to a small one.

While they tossed the dogs a pittance of food, Ballard and Newell passed by, carrying the dead Nascaupe to the next tepee, which was also empty. There they left him for burial in the morning, and from another hut summoned another Nascaupe to take his place in the hospital tent.

At scent of the silent occupant of the next tepee, Koowa, Peeten, and Choatuk howled in unison, a long, quavering, doleful howl, the voice of the primordial wild.



"DOD, but my head's in a whirl,"

groaned the old Factor, as they crunched along after the Surgeon and the Chaplain. "It is fair demented, Louis. I have thought and thought till I can not think of the things at hand. I have not even asked about your journey. You say Channing did not go on to Chimo?"

"No. He came on part way with me."

"How far, Louis?"

"To the top of the tableland beyond Limestone Fall."

"God preserve 's!" The hazards of the wilderness leaped uppermost in Ivan's mind. His grip fell heavily on Lavergne's shoulder. "You say so? What was it, Louis? Cold, or an accident?"

"Neither. I will tell you all about it. But men must be fed as well as dogs. I have fasted as long as any musher can."

"True, Louis! Again I was forgetting. I am thinking I am growing old. Forgie's!" The heavy grip became a caress. "But, man, I have neffer failed, and those I have sent on any mission have neffer failed under my order. I must know if Seton Channing is alive and well. I put it to you, is he alive and well?"

"Alive and well, the last I saw of him!" Lavergne declared.

"Fair grand!" ejaculated Ivan, and let his arm follow his hand across the other's shoulders in comradely fashion. "I would

not have it said that Ivan Trevor effer failed. Old as I am, Louis, there is no reproach on my service to my Company. Stop your hunger with as little as you dare, and afterwards I will be hearing your report."

As they reached the large tepee, the snow turned crimson at their feet.

They looked up.

In the north pulsated the weird Aurora, spilling its flame across the face of the night. At the play of its radiance upon their deer-skin shelter, the huskies raised a second time their wolfish howl.

Ivan shivered. "Yon's Ayume's call," he whispered superstitiously. "She will not be seeing another night."

CHAPTER XVII

THE OTHER SIDE OF THE SHIELD

AS ROUND the red-hot Hudson's Bay stove they sat on blankets spread on the flooring of fresh spruce boughs, Lavergne handed across the circle to Ivan the documents of the Arctic Fur Company.

Whereupon the others rose as if to let them have privacy in a Company matter.

But Louis stopped them. "Stay here," he begged. "This thing is for you all to know."

Wonderingly, they complied, and their wonder grew at the study in change of expression which Ivan's face presented.

At first it showed bewilderment, then doubt, as he read. But cunning comprehension displaced doubt and blossomed into chagrin and antagonism. And at the end all the emotions were merged into righteous anger, the anger of a man who has been the victim of rascally trickery.

"Louis—Louis," he began, his voice trembling wrathfully, "I am growing old. No longer am I having any doubts about that. It must be I am growing old and should be giving place to a younger man."

"Or the Arctic Fur people are growing wise," Louis suggested. "You were fooled before by a Channing. Here's another Channing making greater headway than the first. He has dealt your trade a heavy blow."

"Ho, he has, has he?"

Now the Factor was not growing old. His tremendous shoulders squared. The battle light flared in his eyes. "And are

you thinking for a minute I will be letting his project stand? Man, watch me. Watch me rip open his whole smooth plan as the tide rips the Koksoak ice in Winter. Watch me put the tefflish upstart where he belongs. 'Fore Heffen and he had the face to woo Winona under my nose! Girl!"—whirling on her with the sternness of a judge—"you will neffer be looking on him and neffer be thinking of him again!

"Now where has he gone, Louis? You have not let him go *up* the Kaniapiskau to work out this teffle of a conspiracy? Eh, man? Answer me. I will have him before me. He must answer for his guile, and he must learn the might of the Company."

"He has learned it," Louis declared.

"Wha—at!" Old Ivan's gaze pierced him through. "You assumed authority? Now curb your thunder-and-lightning ways. Where is he this moment, man? Where is he?"

"On the *Longue Traverse*!"

"The teffle!" roared Ivan. "You teffle, Louis! You maniac! God forgie's, who will be undoing what your rashness has done? The Long Trail! In the stark awfulness of it, Louis? You allowed him no food whateffer?"

"Half our supply."

Four breaths of relief became audible.

"And arms, Louis?"

"He had his arms. He had everything I had except the dogs."



NOW their relief was plain. The tense attitudes relaxed. Ivan was his old self again. He drew out his huge pipe and sent up a cloud of smoke.

"I'm no saying it mightn't have been worse," he observed. "You have done a foolish thing, but it can be undone. Tomorrow you will be going back with the dogs and picking up the tefflish traitor where you left him."

"No, I won't," refused Lavergne stubbornly.

"Eh, you won't? Man, are you daring to disobey—"

"Hold on!" cried Louis hotly. "There is nothing to disobey. I have quit the Company."

"Since when, man? Since when?" flashed the Factor.

"Since this very minute. I am going to Chimo to-morrow with the dogs to send relief here. I will never in this world go

back for that cursed Arctic Fur sneak."

"Louis, I am telling you you are not going to Chimo. You are stubborn as a drunken Eskimo. And what about the oath I put to you back in the council room at the Fort, the oath about bringing Channing safely in?"

"Your memory must be getting bad," sneered Lavergne. "You put that oath, but I never took it. You can't say I ever took it."

"Well, maybe not," glared Ivan wrathfully. "But it is not mattering. It was my place to judge, not yours. Were Channing the tefle himself with a millenium's mortgage on your soul, you should have brought him on to Lake No-Lake as arranged. And mark you, Louis, what you failed to do, Ivan Trevor will not fail to do. You are not taking the dogs to Chimo to-morrow. I am taking them for Seton Channing myself."

Whereat a chorus of protest arose from Winona and the rest. The days of Ivan's going on trail were past, they declared. He was too old. And even if age permitted, he was not fit. The strain of the crisis in the Nascaupsee encampments had weakened him greatly.

"But there is nobody else," he argued. "Ballard and Newell cannot be leaving the sick. If they could, their efforts would be of no use because they know nothing whatever about the geography of the Barrens."

"Then send that wiry Nascaupsee who has recovered," urged Newell. "He is sound and strong now. What do you call him?"

"Natua!" put in the Surgeon. "Yes, send Natua."

"There is no use sending Natua," despaired Ivan. "A Nascaupsee could not explain. Channing would think himself pursued and would shoot Natua down at his first hail."

"I am the one to go—with Natua," spoke up Winona. "He knows the Barrens as he knows his own tepee. He can quickly find Seton Channing's trail, and I will do the rest."



"WINONA!" exclaimed the Factor, in admiration. "Now you have it, whatever! My doddering head could never have worked that out. I am telling you, it is a sad day for an old man

when his daughter's wit must fire his brain. You and Natua! Losh, but it's simple as sliding down an otter rub!"

"Do you mean you'll let her go?" demanded Lavergne, leaping upright, all his rancor blazing.

"Why not, man?"

"And," wheeling to confront Winona, "you mean you'll go?"

"Surely, Louis!"

"Then you go because you love him!" he fiercely accused. "You love this rotten renegade, or you would not put a foot forth to find him!"

Winona stepped swiftly up to Lavergne and looked at him with eyes that did not waver. "Louis, you lie!" she countered spiritedly. "Your anger makes you lie! And the blindness of your anger will not let you see why I go."

"You want to force me, out of pure shame, to cross the Barrens to Channing," Lavergne ranted. "But you can't. There's no use trying it."

"I want nothing of the sort!" declaimed Winona. "Of course, no matter what my opinion is of a traitor and a spy, I can not help sympathizing with a man alone in this waste. But that element of sympathy doesn't enter into my actions at all. You understand? I go to keep my father's record spotless. You have hurt his honor and the honor of his Company. Shall I throw away the chance to heal it?"

A flash of lightning-like joy illumined Ivan's features, and with a choking sound in his throat he suddenly caught Winona to his breast.

"Fore Heffen, girl, I am proud of you!" he cried.

CHAPTER XVIII

THE ETERNAL CYCLE

NATUA'S dogwhip cracked.

"Ooish!" he called, and Koowa, Peeten, and Choatuk sprang swiftly away.

"Ouk!" Natua directed to swing the team to the right to clear the circle of Nascaupsee tepees.

The sledge spun round on the solid snow, and he and Winona, riding it *komatik*-fashion, leaned out on the tilting side to keep the balance, smiling back at them all grouped before the large tepee.

"Rad-er, rad-er!" Natua commanded when

free of the encampment. Obediently the team bore off to the left across the Barrens toward the rim of the tableland above the Kaniapiskau. And now Natua looked back no more but crouched low among the fur robes in front of Winona, distributing his weight with nice cunning, urging on the three dogs with voice and lash.

He and Winona had quitted the timber that fringed the shore of Lake No-Lake. No fire could they build till they reached the straggle of fir around the Kaniapiskau benchland. Therefore, Natua flicked the long whip into the huskies, and in the far distance the outfit diminished to a speck against the snows.

Stubborn to the last, more bitter than ever, Lavergne had not offered to take their willing places, and all the while he protested against their going.

"You've no right to do it," he told Ivan. "You've no right to take the chance of finding Channing. Your duty in the sight of Heaven was to send that dog team to Fort Chimo. You should have got word there first. Then you could have done as you liked about this rogue."

"Man," the Factor growled, "your reasoning's poor. There is no sense in your argument. If I send the team to Chimo, where will the lost man be when it gets back? There is a mighty difference between the miles from here to the Kaniapiskau and from here to the Fort.

"This is the logic of it: to pick up the lone man before he wanders far and to leave clear way for going to Chimo. And Natua will be quick to strike Channing's trail.

"He's a dog driver, eh? Look where he and Winona are now! I trained Natua myself at the Fort. Nascaupes who can drive dogs or have dogs to drive are scarce as brown bears in the Labrador.

"But Natua knows. He is good. With that speed and a crust as stiff as ice they'll make the Kaniapiskau at noon. Aye, and they'll have Channing back here by night!"

"Please God, they will!" amended the Chaplain who stood behind him.

"Aye, please God!" murmured Ivan softly.

As if by mutual consent both turned and pulled up their *parka* hoods for outdoor work.

"We have a duty," the Factor explained.

"Will you be lending us that much help, Louis?"

"Yes," Lavergne agreed.



IT WAS a dismal procession. The body of the Nascaupée who had died the night before lay lashed on a stretcher made of spruce poles. The side poles extended a foot or so at the corners, forming handles.

Between the front handles stalked the Factor. Louis bore the rear. The Chaplain walked beside, steadying the burden.

They stumbled down the snowy rocks of the lake shore to the first empty cache. This had become the burial place. Graves could not be dug in the frost, and bodies left unprotected would be preyed upon by roaming packs of starving wolves.

As the men deposited their load by the cairn of stones and rolled aside the weighty boulder that closed its mouth, the irony of circumstance cut home to their hearts. The very cache which should have held the Nascaupes' meat held the ones who had died for lack of that meat.

It was the eternal cycle of things, and Chaplain Newell's words but echoed that eternal cycle:

"Ashes to ashes; dust to dust!"

The Labrador wind howled along the Barrens, and the Arctic cold ran like a knife about their scalps when they shoved back the *parka* hoods and bared their heads an instant.

"Ashes to ashes; dust to dust!"

From the Chaplain's hand powdery snow rattled like dust upon the long, frozen bundle, lashed in a blanket, which they thrust into the primitive vault beside other long, frozen bundles, lashed in blankets.

The hollow thud of the boulder rolled to was the only sound to break the stillness.

In silence they plodded back.

CHAPTER XIX

ECHOES OF MONROE'S DAY

AS THEY warmed themselves in the partitioned end of the tent, the three men were interrupted by the Surgeon's entrance.

His face was grim. "Ayume—" he

began, and stopped, for Chaplain Newell, understanding, rose at once.

"She wants you, too, Ivan," Ballard explained. "And you, Lavergne! She calls for you continually."

Louis hesitated. All the intense loathing in which he held her rushed upon him, but the Factor plucked his sleeve.

"Come, man," he importuned. "If nothing else, it is a dying woman's wish."

So Louis reluctantly followed him.

They went down between the rows of pallets on which lay wrecks of strong hunters, ghosts of stout squaws, wraiths of fat papooses, till they came to the end.

There rested what was left of Ayume. Only a withered crone, a hundred or more years old, was the Nascaupsee belle who had seen her luscious prime when Seton Channing, senior, built his post on Whale River.

Her bleared, faded eyes lighted at sight of them. Her face, that looked like nothing so much as a blackened skull, broadened into what was, to her, a smile of thankfulness, to them a hideous grin.

"Want um bag," she clucked, making feeble gestures toward the corner of the tent where a lot of Indian duffie was piled.

The Factor ferreted it out, a deerskin bag in which she carried her belongings. He untied the mouth, took the bag by the bottom corners and shook forth the contents on the pallet beside Ayume.

It was her dying whim, they thought, to indicate what things, according to tribal custom, she wished buried with her.

Yet she did not touch first the gaudy trinkets beloved of the Nascaupsee. She trounded a wad of dirty paper bound with fibers of the caribou.

"Read um," she commanded. "Give um to that Louis mans."

The Factor tore off the fiber threads. Lavergne was standing by his shoulder, and when Ivan opened the wad, Louis at once recognized the yellow paper as that torn from a fur post's ledger. Three or four outside sheets, blank and rotten with age, came away. Then the inside page with writing appeared.



HE READ the words, "birth certificate," scrawled across the top in blurred letters.

Below, in smaller letters but still blurred, Lavergne read:

WHALE RIVER, August 9th, 18—.

Born to the wife of Seton Channing, two sons (to be named Seton and Arnold).

Signed:

CAMPION RUTHVEN,

Surgeon United Fur Company's ship *Fortune*.

On paper Louis read it, and the Factor read it aloud to him, and yet he did not catch its significance.

But Ayume with her hideous grin croaked up: "Sure um right. Strong mans at Whale River—what you say?—love on me. No will marry me. Got wife in um Post. Wife have two papooses when um Fort burn. Ayume stole um one white papoose. Should um been her papoose."

She gasped over the last word, fell back from the position in which she was propped, and shivered in a deathly convulsion.

Lavergne whirled, as a dazed person, upon Ivan. "Does she mean—? Does she mean—?"

"Mean, man? She stole you, one of twin children! You're white, Louis. And the man you judged is your own brother!"

CHAPTER XX

THE STRAIN OF WHITE

"WHITE! White!" was the song that rang in Lavergne's ears as he stumbled away from the couch of death, away from the sinking Ayume, over whom bent Ballard, Newell, and the Factor. He saw them faintly in low relief, but concrete images, the high lights and shadows, were wasted on him.

His feet moved without volition, impelled by a force within that was stronger than the will or the heart, and he passed blindly into the partitioned end of the tent.

There he groped among the dunnage for his outfit of the trails.

"The man you judged is your own brother!"

The Factor's words would not leave him. They grew in force, constraining him to action. Impatiently he rummaged his packs, arranging food, ammunition, all the indispensable things without which no man must set foot on the shortest of Labrador journeys.

"The man you judged is your own brother!"

Lavergne had to undo that judgment. For him there was no other course. Though

a brother of his had been crimson with crime, he could not be so judged by him. And not to a woman and a Nascauppee would he leave the finding of his brother.

As he arranged things, his shaken mind gradually adjusted itself to a balance. He had a status in the world after all. No stain of birth now stood between him and Winona. The thought filled Lavergne with dizzy pride. No bastard white! No mongrel quarter breed! No Nascauppee whelp! He was born with honor, of a white mother!

Up into his impressionistic mind flashed the picture of her, leaning forth from her couch in the turmoil that filled the natal hour in the Whale River Post. He could see her distinctly, as if he had known her in life, leaning forth, demanding of Ruthven that he should record the birth of her two sons.

She knew not what calamity might come to herself, to Ruthven, to every man, but she was satisfied that Ivan Trevor made no war on infants. They would be spared, and they must not be spared to the curse of an obscure birth. What, she realized from her own birth and breeding in a social sphere, was all in all to a white, the white should have.

Therefore she insisted that Ruthven record! And Ruthven tore the yellow sheets from the Fur Post ledger and wrote while the flames roared and the axes echoed and the guns belched viciously over the palisades.



IN LIFE Lavergne had never seen her. In death he had never seen her. Yet now could he see her as he stood up, equipped for the trail. And he visioned her face as the face of Winona, only with the maturer light of motherhood upon it.

Calm, soulful, pure, it lay a moment on Lavergne's mental horizon as a spotless evening cloud lies in the golden west, and he had a swift retrospect of the many things he had missed in life.

Never had his childish eyes opened from the cradle upon a white mother's tender face. Never had he essayed wonderful feats under her proud eye, come at her call, prayed at her knee, learned on her lap, cried at her heart.

No home associations had ever blessed him, no companionship, no aid or advice. Love in these beautiful phases had never

come to him. From the first he was alone, even as he was now setting foot alone on the sledge trail left by Natua and Winona.

But with the crunch of his snowshoes on that trail present realities returned.

Lavergne began to marshal his powers of assault and resistance. His body assumed the natural pose for speed, and he launched himself swiftly forward.

Behind arose a shout from the tepees.

Lavergne did not pause, did not even turn his head.

"Louis!" the great voice of the Factor roared. "Louis! Whereffer, in Heffen's sight, will you be going?"

Louis could hear Ivan's heavy, grunting breaths and the *pluff-pluff* of his moccasins in the snow as he ran after, vainly attempting to catch up.

"He is mad," Ivan wailed as he was left far behind.

For, wise as he was, the Factor failed to understand that it was Lavergne's new-found manhood which drove him across the Barren Grounds.

CHAPTER XXI

THE LAND GOD GAVE TO CAIN

FOR a long time Lavergne traveled without glancing round, running with the easy hip lurch and long stride of the northern tripper. Then, as he slowed to breathe himself, he gazed back over his shoulder. The Nascauppee encampment was invisible.

Invisible, too, the ragged timber strip which sheltered it!

Far as the eye could range, no standing stick marred the illimitable, rolling sea of snow. As the heaving ocean shuts out the distant land, so the convolutions on the crusted Barrens shut out the camps of men. To the east, west, north, and south there appeared only snow piled on snow, snow in smooth plateaus, in low, wrinkled ridges, in waves, folds, hummocks, in fantastic shapes like unknown monsters. On and on stretched the snow as if to infinitude, as if there could be no other world but this frozen world, no temperate grass lands to the south or waving palms to the south of that.

In the north was a purple line, hazy, shifting, the lip of the tableland above the

Kaniapiskau River. Any one but a Northman would have taken it for blue clouds banking on the horizon.

Raising but this deceptive landmark, how well the Barrens deserved its name! In it was no movement, sound, or life, except that which came to it extraneously. The snow fell upon it, the wind howled over it, daring feet crossed it occasionally, but organically it was dead. Its plane lay relatively flat. Its environment was flat as a thread. The very sky itself was flat, tilting like a lid.

In its vast loneliness, entirely without contrast or detail, it seemed the dull, pulseless surface of a planet that has cooled. All the evidence that life had existed here centered in the sledge trail upon which Louis planted his rackets.

Nor was that life very near to him.

Fast as he traveled, he knew that Natua and Winona were going probably much faster. He held no hope of overtaking them while they drove the dogs, but when they stopped to eat within reach of firewood on the rim of the tableland and began casting about for Channing's trail, Louis planned to come up with them.

He looked at the sun to gage the time, but he could make nothing of it. Small as an eye in the heavens it shone and seemed to be smoked over by vapors drifting in the upper air levels. One moment its light pierced downward in a long shaft like the ray of a burning-glass.

The next moment that shaft was filled with dancing motes of snow, and the glare was broken into minutest sparklings, as if the sunlight burst to earth through a wide filter. The grains stung Lavergne's face like thrown sand. It came from afar, the dampness squeezed out of it, compressed to pellets by extreme frost, driven by the force of some huge atmospheric disturbance behind it.



SO THAT was what the moaning, knife-edged wind by the cairn at Lake No-Lake meant! Louis must then have been preoccupied, or he would have read the signs. Even now, when he knew for a certainty what was coming, he tried to deceive himself. He tried to tell himself that it was only a flurry.

Yet at the same time he knew he was lying to his wilderness instinct. As the caribou, nose to the wind, scents man,

Lavergne, nose to the north, scented the blizzard.

There was no use in turning back for safety. The storm was swooping swiftly. Lavergne could win only a mile or two before the tumult leaped demonlike upon the Barrens.

The sledge track filled with the swirling snow. The wind began with terrific pressure to lift Lavergne's bending figure. Each bellowing gust threw him back to the perpendicular, held him there, buffeted him from side to side, and by a sudden withdrawal of its strength almost pitched him on his head.

Continually it charged and retired erratically, until at last it poured in a steady, ever increasing blast, a perfect torrent of wind whose only suggestion was greater fury behind.

The sun went out, clinching with the storm giants which rioted across his zone, and the ruthless feet of those giants made all the Barrens smoke. Pallor, gloom, night, fell over the world like three successive blankets.

The distant loom of tableland was gone. Gone the shining sea of white crust! The sweat on Louis's face was ice in a minute. His moist clothes set hard as armor. He clutched the strings of his *parka* hood and drew the pucker tight, leaving only the narrowest of slits for his eyes. Even then he had to hold his fur-gantleted hand in front of his eyes, for the blizzard's breath seared them like flame. Here and there he staggered, seeing nothing, his hand raised, his body bent double, boring drunkenly about through the snow inferno.

The forty-pound pack upon his back, the presence of which he scarcely felt before, now tripled its weight. It lay like a load of lead between his shoulders. The rifle, cased against the Arctic climate, that he carried in his right hand dragged down like an iron bar.

The unearthly tempest put such a pressure upon things as bore them to the ground. All outer space might have been a gigantic funnel and all the winds of all the worlds herded into it to blow upon him at the funnel's spout.

Crossing a plateau of iced rock, scoured clean by the hurricane, Louis was knocked off his feet and swept along its whole length till he brought up with a shock against a storm-hidden boulder at the farther end.

Dazed, he crawled round to its lee where the drifts were piled ten feet high. This was what he had been blindly groping for. Immediately he burrowed like a wolf-dog.

Numb, faint, sickened with the battle, he managed to scrape a hole, confined as a grave, in the snow beside the boulder. Into it he plunged. The packsack went under his head. The blanket off the top of the packsack was pulled over him. At once the scurrying snow closed the mouth of his burrow.

With the shutting out of the wind, the temperature of his body rose somewhat. He felt in the packsack and gorged himself on caribou meat. For meat in his stomach and snow shielding him constituted his only means of resistance. The cold was frightful. He felt that he was not in sub-Arctic or Arctic cold, but upon the very spike of the Pole.

During the first hour he thought vaguely of Winona and Natua and of the man they sought. After that he remembered nothing. He didn't think. He slipped into a cold lethargy. This in itself was good. Had he fancied himself warm, all would have been ended.

But he remained cold as a corpse is cold. He came near to the verge of freezing, yet did not plunge over the edge of the abyss into the balmy dreamland beneath.

Thus in a coma he lay till dawn.

CHAPTER XXII

THE TALE THE BACK TRAIL TOLD

AWAKENING was agony. At least such muscular unlimbering as might be termed awakening, for even in the deepest drowsiness of his comatose condition he had not actually slept. Every movement was torture. Minutes of severe straining were necessary before he could move. The orange light that filtered through his snow-covering told him that a clear day had followed the blizzard.

At first with feeble and then with growing strength Louis began to beat about to free himself from the burrow. At last he wriggled out. Renewed torture came as he stood up and straightened his body. Each limb had to be stretched, each joint oiled, each muscle rubbed supple by the hands as a child works loose the rusted mechanism of a tin soldier.

Once able to feel his feet under him again, Lavergne knew they were not frozen. The fur lining of the shoe-packs had no doubt been their salvation. He stamped round, jumped in the air, and flailed his arms across his breast.

The rush of the red blood to the surface inflicted excruciating pain. It stabbed the flesh like knives, but Louis persevered. He ran in circles about the boulder. In half an hour his frame was full of surging fire, real fire that sprang from the furnace of his veins.

But he did not cease. He continued circling the rock, delving into his packsack for meat. His breakfast finished, he seized his rifle and darted off without giving the frost a chance to destroy what only fierce persistence had accomplished.

There was no track to follow. Louis steered for the tableland's lip. All morning he trailed in the vivid sun glare across a spotless cameo world carved in the matrix of the North. And there in the first fringe of timber he came upon the sledge furrow in the snow.

Louis drew a breath of relief. Winona and Natua had reached the spruce before the blizzard and weathered it safely. They were now bearing a few points to the west, skirting the rim of the Barrens, evidently searching for the lost man's trail where he should have sallied forth after the storm.

Swiftly Lavergne turned into the narrow, packed trail, sprinting at top speed and gazing keenly from the crest of every convolution to discern the traveling outfit ahead. So intent was he upon this part of the pursuit that he paid little heed to the detail of the track in which he trod until a snowshoe imprint in the side snow, where the one who broke the trail for the dogs had tripped and stepped wide to recover his balance, riveted his attention.

He bent low and studied the shallow impression. There was no mistaking it. Louis saw, not the stamp of Natua's or Winona's egg-tail shoes, but that of the long-tail shoe he himself had fashioned in the Autumn camp by Limestone Fall.

Those shoes were upon the feet of Seton Channing, and Channing was breaking trail for the team Natua and Winona had brought across the waste. Had they found him already? Lavergne could see that no one drove or ran behind the sledge. Were Natua and Winona riding on it?

Louis kneeled and tested the track. The

grooves made by the runners were not deep enough for that. Nor was there visible that outward slewing of the rear end of the sled when ridden by any person. Also, the dog train was not heading for Lake No-Lake.

Suspicion seized Lavergne. How came Channing to be driving the sledge alone? Had he gained it by force? And where were Winona and Natua?



AT THE thought that Channing might have harmed them, Louis leaped swiftly on the back trail. The back trail led off over a small ridge, thrust like a sharp tongue into the Barrens.

On the farther slope he ran abruptly upon the site of Channing's last camp, a one-night bivouac from the signs—the fresh ashes, the fresh tent-flooring of lopped boughs, the absence of a wood pile. Around the camp ground Lavergne circled to where the sledge track came in, and, following the furrow with his eyes across the mile-wide valley, he beheld Natua's deerskin shelter on the other side.

Shouting as he went, Louis dashed across, and at the sound of a voice in the barren stillness Winona and Natua sprang into view from behind the deerskin.

"It's Louis!" cried Winona, in wonder and in alarm. "What brought you here? Oh, something's wrong! Some one's dead! I see death in your face. Louis—is it my father?"

"No, nobody,—except Ayume!" he panted. "But Channing! I read his trail. He has your sled!"

"Took um—we sleep," whined Natua excitedly. "All um night we sit up. Feed um fire. Day come—" Natua let his head fall forward—"take um then. We wake—gone!"

"Yes, the blizzard blotted out everything round us on the tableland," Winona explained, "but Natua was not at fault. He steered blindly straight into the timber. So blindly that we landed, without knowing it, only a mile from Seton Channing.

"We made camp and kept on a huge fire. He could not help but see the blaze. And, what with the day's fatigue and the night's watch, Natua and I were so tired that both of us were drowsing at dawn when the storm died. While we drowsed, he crept up and made off with the dogs and sled."

"Thinking he had caught me and given

me the same medicine I gave him!" exclaimed Lavergne.

"Yes. He took our camp for yours. He would think of no other near. But though he doesn't know it, he is welcome to the sled. I am sure it will take him to Chimo. As for ourselves, see, Natua has made a toboggan to enable us to cross back to Lake No-Lake!"



WITH pride Natua exhibited a toboggan manufactured from long, flat, limber pieces of spruce, trimmed to shape with his knife and tied with thongs of deerskin cut from the tent flap. On the toboggan he had bound a supply of spruce wood that would burn for five or six hours.

"We snowshoe all um day," elucidated Natua. "Go till middle um night. Stop—eat—enough fire till day come again. Use um toboggan last. Factor's girl she get tired, Natua draw like wood. Come Lake No-Lake that day."

"Good!" nodded Louis. "That's the way it's done! But be careful, Natua. Use your cunning every minute. Nothing by any chance must happen to Winona. Though you wore out your life on the Barrens, she must safely reach the encampments."

"Um come Lake No-Lake all right," promised Natua, with stoic certitude. "But," he added, "Factor's girl wrong about um man. Him no come Chimo that way!"

"I know that," lamented Louis. "And, my Heaven, for you both to be so close to him, for me to be so near at hand, and still have him go on!"

"You came for *him*, then?" asked Winona. "But why? What in the world compelled you?"

"This, Winona!" He handed her the yellow ledger sheet Ayume had bequeathed him.

"Two sons!" Winona read, wrestling with bewilderment. "And the other one?"

"Ayume stole."

"Louis—you!" Her very soul revealed itself in her eyes. "White! Oh, what a gift of God!"

"Yes, a gift," he affirmed solemnly, turning again to the forward trail. "If I had let things take their natural course, all I had to do was to put out my hand for the gift. But my fiery self must make a prize of it, a prize to be bitterly won."

"You mean?—but the thing's impossible, Louis!" she protested vehemently, darting with hands outstretched to stay him. "It's madness! It's suicide! He's only breaking trail till he gets up on the tableland. Then he'll ride. You'll never catch him. Oh, don't you see? I can't let you go!"

But, avoiding her grip, he sprang away on the forward trail.

Winona ran after him a little way, even as her father had done at Lake No-Lake, but Lavergne's speed was too great.

She dropped to her knees in the trail with a cry of anguish that echoed weirdly in the frosty calm.

"Louis—Louis!" she supplicated.

The plaint of her voice was like a knife in his heart, but still he went on, his face the face of a man who crosses the abyss between heaven and hell.

CHAPTER XXIII

THE FORWARD TRAIL

THE arch-spirits of the wild must tell each other of that agony. They must whisper to each other—in the seething snow, in the moaning breeze, in the rustling Aurora—of that stalk, grim as Death, terrible as hell. Across the snow-bound and, to Channing, unrecognizable, Koksoak River, Lavergne followed through the starving days whose sunrises and sunsets were fantastically one, through weird, glaring nights with skies lit by burnished moon and sapphire stars, fired and cross-fired by the Aurora's flame.

To protect himself from the dreaded snow blindness, Louis fashioned wooden spectacles with slits in them for his eyes. With the aid of these he stuck like a hound to Channing's trail, and like a hound he read the tale it told.

On the plateau above the Koksoak a bloody smudge showed where Channing had killed his first dog and, endowed with a new lease of life, pressed on past Nedluk Lake to the Leaf River. In the country north of the Leaf, where the sun failed and the eternal Flaming Night came down, the swerving of the track revealed that Channing himself had seen that the compass line he was running for Fort Chimo was wrong.

There arose no river bluffs, no coast conformation. Nothing met the eye but a mammoth tableland, monotonous in its unrelief,

uncanny in its Arctic gloom, growing only the foot-tall dwarf birch and the Lilliputian willow, less than an inch in height, and stretching into invisibility as if to eternity.

The roof of the world it was and not the loom of Chimo that he sought. From the ice-locked sounds of Hudson's Bay to the floe-choked inlets of Ungava Bay, the plateau ran unbroken. Unmapped, untrodden, bathed in the ghastly cold of interstellar space, it seemed the parting-point of body and soul.

And thence southward again, still sticking to the trail, it was the soul and not the body which upbore Lavergne. For he was slowly starving, and vaguely he knew that all the impressions given him about starvation were false. Although he had had no food for three days, he did not get any hungrier. It seemed that he was as hungry as he could get.

Moreover, he felt no pang and no stomach discomfort. Only, he weakened gradually. His body was a shell devoid of energy. Sensations of unreality oppressed. This realm through which he passed was like no known realm. Always the same aspect of things, the barren snows ripped up by the thin thickets, the low ridges crowned by the jugate silhouettes of the firs!

Always the same circle of fiendish frosts, twilight days, molten nights! Always the toil and the unrest! Spectral fears haunted him, the intangible loom of danger, phantasmagoric fancies which invested the lifeless landscape with leering demon faces.

The world was grandly, and existence terribly, simplified. No emotions flowered in the iron waste, and no disturbing outside thoughts obsessed Lavergne. His mind was a vacuum across which ran the thread-like line of the trail.

Crawling on it back to Leaf River, he found the stain of the second dog's blood, and down at Nedluk Lake were the marks of a fight in the snow where the remaining dog had made a raid on the meat. Evidently a successful raid, for the next day a ruddy spot and the abandoned sledge and outfit advertised the death of the raider. Louis searched the outfit for a scrap of food. He found none, but he took the dogwhip. It was leather, and at the last it could be chewed.

South of the Koksoak, Channing's trail ceased being run to compass, wound aimlessly east, west, north, south, circled foolishly,

tied itself in a maze. Louis could not understand till he saw Channing's compass itself in the snow. Thrown away! That could mean only one thing—lost faith.

 LOST faith! Lavergne knew it was a fearful affliction, worse than searing frost, foodless Barrens, mad mirages. For faith in the magnetic needle dies in the Northman as faith in God dies in the Christian soul. Here in the middle of the Barrens, not fifteen miles from Lake No-Lake, Channing had cast away his means of salvation. He had reached that condition of huge unbelief in the pointing finger of steel, the inevitable condition into which every lost man degenerates if he be long enough lost.

East on the Barren Grounds the trail turned, and Louis weakly cursed at the irony of the thing. He fretted and raved over it. Why could not Channing by chance, since he journeyed wholly by chance, point straight to the south toward Lake No-Lake? He asked himself the question a thousand times and a thousand times in a fury demanded of himself the answer.

But there was no answer, and like the steady dropping of the barometer before a terrific change his spirit went down. It settled in that depression which is reconciliation to the inevitable. With the depression of the spirit the waning of the bodily powers kept pace. Toward noon of that day on the Barrens, Lavergne was approaching the limit there is to all physical and mental exertion. Night found him very close to it.

Up in the jumble of frozen lakes that straggle far beyond the headwaters of High-fall Creek, the resistance to be overcome proved greater than the power that propelled. Louis fell repeatedly, rose repeatedly, and at last futilely struggled to rise. He still clung to the dogwhip, taken from Channing's abandoned outfit, and in despair he chewed upon the thing to revive the shadow of vigor. But it was tough and frozen solid. He could derive not the semblance of nutriment. With a sigh he gave up the task and lay inert.

Overhead, palpitant with life, the Aurora played upon his prostrate form. He lay beneath its blazing radiance, waiting for Death, and to his ears there seemed to come the crunch, crunch of Death's snowshoes in the wind.

CHAPTER XXIV

THE PULSE PRIMORDIAL

L AVERGNE raised his eyes to greet a phantom, but across the foreground of his vision there plunged a real man. Bulking hugely against the flaming sky, he came boring on in a swirl of snow, bending forward as if mania-ridden.

He swung his head from side to side like a beast. Inhuman snarls fell from his lips. At every stride he thrust his jaw toward the north, seeming to project his whole being into the effort at finding his way.

At first Louis merely sensed the man's coming, viewing him in a detached manner and failing to understand who he was. But the mad impetus of his approach was the shock that stirred Lavergne from his apathy.

As the charging night wind blows flame from the camp coals seemingly dead, so the stimulus of the man's advance kindled Louis's dormant senses. He stared at him with clearing sight and conceived the image before him, the tall, strong figure of Channing, the frost-blackened face, the sightless eyes.

Snow blind! Louis might have known it from the first. Why else the twistings, circlings, doublings of the trail? Why else the throwing away of the compass? He hadn't lost faith in it, after all, but it was of no use when he could not read the dial. Now utterly bewildered, walking in darkness though the world that was an inferno of crimson light, Channing, who had unknowingly fled from Lavergne so long, was at last, and still unknowingly, trailing to him.

While Louis stared, fascinated, Channing passed within a yard. Crouched upon the snow, Louis felt that the other must see him. But the head only swung from side to side without showing recognition. The creaking snowshoes skimmed the drifts without halt.

Lavergne's hand went out to stop him, but Channing was beyond reach. Lavergne willed to cry aloud to him, but he could not speak. All he could utter was a groan as he rolled over and crept to his knees. With a great agony he got to his feet, propping himself by stabbing the butt of the dogwhip into the crust, and shrieking at the pain of his endeavor.

Like a flash the shriek turned Channing.

Now, too, he sensed his enemy. He rushed in the direction of the sound.

At his rush the primeval instinct of self-preservation, which fights while a breath can be drawn or a muscle moved, leaped triumphant in Lavergne. It was the strength that flung back his arm, shot the arm forward, and slashed the whip full in Channing's face. It was the power that staggered and broke Channing's rush from the front, turned it to the side, and stalled it off until he was bloody, breathless, and whining.

 AT BAY Channing stood like a rebellious husky, snarling in the husky's voice. It was the only voice possible. His lips and tongue were swollen from snow-eating to thrice their normal size. The lips were bleached with frost till they seemed afoam. His tongue lolled like a dog's from his gaping mouth.

Like a half conquered dog he paused, uncertain whether to attack again. Louis seized that moment of uncertainty to bend it to his benefit. The whip cracked. The lash stung bitterly.

The beaten man turned tail and retreated a few steps. He faced south as he did so, and the single movement fired Lavergne with inspiration.

Could he make Channing repeat that movement, repeat it indefinitely?

Due south and about fifteen miles away lay Lake No-Lake. Could a man be driven to it like a dog? There was no other way. Could he yet win success from failure?

The very thought resurrected, recreated! There was power still in his muscles. There was marrow still in his bones. And, if bones, muscles, heart, and entire body failed, Louis swore he would still succeed. He might burn up the residue of his soul on the altar of his will, but he would arrive.

CHAPTER XXV

PRIMAL MAN

LAVERGNE was in no wise fully conscious of the phases and details of that passage. He had the impression of the seemingly eternal traverse only in its formidable entirety. He knew that the fifteen miles to the spruce trees on Lake No-Lake were fifteen brutal miles.

Each separate mile of the fifteen was

marked with shreds of Channing's garments and clots of Channing's blood. Louis flayed him to prevent him from turning. He flayed him to keep him going to the goal. The demon within Lavergne fought to keep the mastery already gained.

Slashing, falling, and rising to slash again, Louis went on and on through the eeriness of the Barren Grounds. There echoed in the wilderness no man-made sound except the rasp of their breathing, the shuffle of their snowshoes, the whip's pistol-like report, and Channing's snarling when the lash bit home.

Onward they lurched over the fantastic hummocks, over the wine-stained windrows, on under shawm-voiced winds, under the barbaric revel of the painted Aurora.

Continually on their left loomed a mocking mirage, the inverted picture of four men driving two dog trains across the carmine sky. If Louis for a second lifted his gaze from Channing, he invariably stared at the image in the clouds full of its own peculiar wonder and significance.

Where was the original of the reflection?

At Fort Chimo? At Whale River? Nichikun Lake? Northwest River Post? Or might it be a party on trail? Lavergne had no means of knowing. He swung the whip and crawled on, striving to cast the mirage out of his mind. Still it persisted in spite of his efforts at destruction.

He might as well have attempted to destroy the wild, weird mystery of the Barrens, the endless snows, the Flaming Night itself. With these, the mirage was part of the spell that wrapped them around as they forged over the waste to the first purple shadows of the spruce.

Through the fringe of green and on up the shore of Lake No-Lake they staggered. Lavergne's face was raw-red with the searing frost. His head reeled, and his limbs shook as if with palsy.

Yet he was still the master. The flaming spirit of him drove the strong man like a dog. For Channing, unlike Lavergne, had gone full of meat to the end. Trusting to reach safety before the huskies were done, he was still powerful for a final launching of his blind self through bewilderment.



FROM some stages of snow blindness there is recovery, but Louis knew that for Channing there was none. The intense sun glare, snow glitter,

and Aurora blaze had all combined to inflame his eyes for so long a period that the optic nerves were injured beyond repair.

And Channing was otherwise changed. As surely and as ruthlessly as the broad-ax shapes the log, the North had shaped him. It had chipped away the veneer and exposed the true inner being stark naked. With heavy, clean, deft strokes the North had shorn him of lies and hypocrisies, of wiles and juggleries.

Thus it was not Seton Channing the polished Southerner whom Lavergne drove forward to the Nascaupsee encampment. It was the real man under the polish, a blind man who craved fire and roof and food and blanket. It was a man shaken by the application of the Northern laws to the foundations of his soul.

The crimson Aurora outlined the tepees before them. The circle was broken, nearly depleted. Louis looked through many bare poles. He wondered at this, but when he saw a large pot boiling over a fire, he understood.

Those who had fought the fight of survival here among the most primeval tribe on the continent were, like the two who had come across the Barrens, at the last grim extremity. They had stripped the deerskin coverings from the tepees of the dead to boil into soup.

The heat of the fire after the frost struck like a furnace blast. Lavergne reached a hand to Channing's shoulder and shoved him around the blaze toward the big tent's door.

Channing stumbled upon a spruce limb near the flap and fell headlong in the tepee entrance, almost landing upon Winona, who appeared with the suddenness of an apparition, coming out with a pail to the big pot.

She gave a little scream of fright. Channing seemed to know her voice. He got up, searching her out with his blind eyes, and started toward her.

Winona took one terrified look at the real Channing, fled under Lavergne's protecting whip, and clung to him there.

"Louis—Louis!" she cried.

Her tone and touch told him many things.

To primal man at last turned his primal mate.

CHAPTER XXVI

THE FACE OF THE MIRAGE

AS HE lay exhausted on one of the rabbit-skin couches near the door, a faint crackling like the distant snapping of whips rang in Lavergne's seething ears. It sounded and died before Ballard and the Factor, emaciated shadows of their former selves, came to give him the last drops of stimulant in the Surgeon's case.

"It is fair dementing to think of it, Louis!" wailed Ivan. "To bring a lost man back in the starvation hour!"

"Eh?" Lavergne roused under the stimulant. "No such hour! Listen! There are the whips!" The crackling came once more.

"It is the fire you are hearing, man," declared the Factor.

"It is food, I say," persisted Louis.

He had heard the crack of a dogwhip too often in the drive across the Barrens to mistake it for anything else. But Ivan Trevor looked at Ballard and made a motion as of a hand brushing away a fly from his forehead. Lavergne understood.

"I'm not mad," he told them. "You'll see. I saw them last night in a mirage. Four men with two dog trains!"

In a sort of despair the Factor shot at the Surgeon a glance which embodied the unmade motion.

Louis' anger flared weakly. "All right!" he exclaimed petulantly. "Look and see for yourself!"

He motioned toward the doorway as the crackling became louder, and to humor him Ivan pulled the flap aside.

Loping up the shore appeared the figures in Lavergne's mirage—four men driving two teams of dogs.

"'Fore Heffen, a miracle!" cried the Factor, as a man with the stamp of the sea upon him and three of Sachelle's Fort runners swung up.

"Miracle?" laughed the man with the stamp of the sea upon him. "Not a bit of it! Not even chance work! Are you the Factor? I'm Captain Henshaw of the Government ship *Curlew*. I didn't fancy putting her through the Spring ice pack to meet Seton Channing, so I came up late in the Fall and wintered her at the Fort.

"Channing hadn't reached Chimo according to schedule. It was my business to find out why. Your chief trader said you were

meeting him and would have him winter here with you at Lake No-Lake, so I came on to see him on some Government business.

"There is a little work on the coast north of the Koksoak that was overlooked. I judged he would be able to do it before the Winter ends and be ready to go south in the Spring. I suppose he's well?"

Ivan, knowing that Henshaw lied, looked at him long. "Channing is far from well," he answered abruptly. "He has had a judgment. Not my judgment, you'll mind, but a greater! Captain Henshaw, he will be going south with you in the Spring, but he will neffer be casting eyes on the South."

"Eh? What do you mean? Is anything wrong? By Jove, now when I look at you, you seem sick yourself! You're pale. You're a wreck. What in——"

"He starves!" the Surgeon roared at him. "The whole camp starves!"

"Starves!" echoed Henshaw. He jumped for the food packs on the sledges.

"Hold, man, one minute!" old Ivan parleyed. "I will be letting you know you are not sharing with us as a friend but as an enemy. The *Curlew* is no Government ship. She is an Arctic Fur ship. And you are Arctic Fur men.

"But that is not mattering. Your plan is spoiled, thanks to Louis Lavergne, with all his flaming spirit and his thunder-and-lightning ways, who—" flashing a quizzical smile aside at Louis—"was quitting the Company a short while back, but who, I am thinking, is in its service still!

"So we will be eating your food as an enemy and traveling to Fort Chimo with you as an enemy.

"And there we will be having the pleasure of bidding you go to the teffle. To the teffle, Captain Henshaw!"



JACKRABBIT HOBBS

A Tale of the Diamond

by
Chester T. Crowell

THE fatal fifth inning was over and nine stalwarts of the Home Club were trotting in from the fray rather disconsolately. The Visitors had scored a run—the only run made in this game so far. Moreover, they had made the run on two errors and a sacrifice. The Visitors had registered no hits.

That was what made the run so unfortunate.

Hogan of the Visitors, who was "going good," had allowed but one hit—and that was regarded as an accident. Jackrabbit Hobbes of the Home Club had chased a high-put curve half way down to first base and by superhuman effort poled it with

the end of his stick. It dropped safely behind the short stop and went for a single. Outside of that not a hit had been made, and Jackrabbit had "died" on second.

Cheers of loyal fans greeted the players as they neared the grand stand. There may be more noise at Shibe Park or the Polo Grounds when a pennant hangs in the balance, but there could not be more racket *per capita* than is spilled over the gonfalon of the Texas League.

The grand stand was looking Hobbes over rather critically as he trotted in. He didn't look very good in spite of his hit. This was his first game with the mighty and illustrious Home Club. It was his first appearance in any except sand lot baseball. He was fresh from the brushwood of Southwest Texas—Pearsall, to be exact—and sporting editors said he still wore cockle burs in his hair. One season in the Texas League had discovered him.

Hobbes had such slender legs that it seemed remarkable that they supported him. Abe Lincoln once remarked that a man's legs should be just long enough to reach from his stomach to the ground. Jackrabbit Hobbes's legs seemed to do more than that. Manager Halloran said they seemed to reach from his fifth rib to the ground.

He didn't handle them especially well, either. They looked floppy, as if there would be plenty of opportunity for a ball to go between them, or they might get crossed and cause their owner to alight on his left ear.

The nine stalwarts of the Home Club took it for granted that Hobbes was called Jackrabbit because his hind legs were so long. As a matter of fact, he was called Jackrabbit because the boys around Pearsall declared he could run a rabbit to death. And stranger things have been.

With perspiration streaming off his nose and chin, Hobbes trotted from left field. The grand stand looked on, undecided, but impressed unfavorably. Apparently this man had no waist, but his shoulder muscles bulged like those of a wrestler. He looked almost as if a puff of wind had gotten into his shirt. And his head seemed to come out of the middle of his chest with a ridiculous tilt forward. It wasn't placed on top of him at all; consequently he looked round-shouldered.

The Italian skies of Texas had not beam-

ed on Jackrabbit Hobbes twenty-four years to no purpose, however, and with a hit to his credit on one time up he felt jubilant. The grand stand did not trouble him. An excess of animal spirits prompted him to look with amusement on Kibler, the diminutive third baseman, who was wobbling in ahead of him, going toward the ice water keg.

Kibler was what a chauffeur would call low-gearred. That is to say, his legs did not have to reach far to cover the distance from his stomach to the ground, and the legs were as big around at the ankle as the calf. Kibler was a little lump of muscle and energy. Suiting the action to a suggestion that had come into his mind from nowhere, Jackrabbit Hobbes bounded with the speed of a deer across half of the diamond and jumped clear over Kibler, alighting gracefully. The action had all the charming abandon of a calf romping over the barnyard.

That settled it with the grand stand. Jackrabbit Hobbes was accepted right then. For all future time he was of the elect. He never suspected it, but that bit of playfulness kept him on the team when there were reasons for releasing him. He had made good with the fans; and a player who is in solid with the bleachers can always count on a big item in the credit side of his baseball ledger.



AMONG those who saw and admired this feat was Baby Myrtle, who was cashier for Henry, the soda pop man under the grand stand. Baby Myrtle was ten years old. Her earliest recollections were associated with baseball. While she had never dared speak to a player, she loved to be near them during the fleeting moments when they passed by on the blessed afternoons when the Home Club was at home. Baby Myrtle thought it was very kind of the players to come down from Olympus and smile upon the multitude. But she had not left her cash register to see the players especially just then. She had gone to see daddy make his announcement.

Daddy was known as Pap Mullins to fans and players. He had been a famous pitcher in the early days of the national game when bets ran high. It was on the occasion when his airtight twirling brought victory to his team that frenzied fans for whom he had

won money picked him up bodily and carried him on their shoulders to the nearest barroom.

Pap Mullins's triumph was also his Waterloo. Electric fans had just been introduced and like a great many other new things were to be seen first in saloons. A fan blade struck Pap Mullins behind the ear. When he came out of the hospital he was afflicted with periods of lost memory and other peculiarities that unfitted him for the pitcher's mound.

But, like the artist, he could not leave the sacred haunts, so Pap took care of the grounds now and announced to-morrow's game through a megaphone after each fifth inning. As uniform for this service he wore a white suit and a white cap with a shiny black vizor.

Baby Myrtle thought it one of the most imposing and dramatic sights in all the annals of men when the players delayed the game a few seconds, the grand stand thousands hushed their chatter, and daddy shouted like a master of destiny his prediction of to-morrow's clash between the Olympians. Baby Myrtle never missed this feature of the game.

"Game called to - mor - row at four o'clock," he was shouting laboriously, using all the air in his lungs on each syllable.

Baby Myrtle's little lungs filled and her breast swelled with pride.

"If I could just be a man when I grow up," she was thinking, "and be a baseball player!" Nor had she abandoned hope that this might be.

Pap Mullins made his announcement first to the left field bleachers, then to the grand stand, and finally to the right field bleachers. As he left the home plate going toward the right field bleachers the visiting Club pranced out upon the field and a Home Club batter came to the plate.

"Game called to - mor - row," Pap was shouting when the first ball was thrown. The batter bent his entire weight and strength against the swing and met the ball on the nose. But it was one of those deceptive out curves and the line drive traveled like a bullet toward the right field bleachers.

"At four o'clock," Pap Mullins had just said, when the ball struck him on the back of the head. Baby Myrtle gasped, but she knew that if there is one thing more than any other that baseball players and all

other real heroes dislike under such circumstances it is to have anything feminine fussing around. She stood in the grand stand aisle until Jackrabbit Hobbes gathered up the prostrate form and bore it to the clubhouse. Then, as she simply had to cry, she went back behind her cash register to complete the ordeal unobserved. She was not only sorry for daddy, but the crowd had laughed when he was hit. Having no opportunity to ask, she did not know until that evening that daddy was dead. Neither did the fans. The game went on as it always does.



"NO RUNS, no hits," was the way the summary of the last half of the fifth inning read in the *Evening Herald*. Their time at bat ended, the Home Club went to the defense for the sixth inning. The third man was retired when the Visitors had two men on bases. It was a long, hard sixth inning and the Home Club came in discouraged because they feared they could not hit.

That one run on the scoreboard looked like a mountain. Jackrabbit Hobbes was first up, with the catcher and pitcher following. But Hobbes was jubilant. He supposed every one was, since the Visitors had not been able to score their two men on bases. He marched to the plate with his heaviest bat and a light heart.

The pitcher had noticed his apparent willingness to strike at anything and meant to have fun with him this time. The first ball thrown was a high, wide outcurve; but it broke too early, and Jackrabbit Hobbes let it get away from him for no other reason than that he couldn't get to it. When it smacked in the catcher's mit he stepped back off the plate. He had advanced three feet hoping to hit what any one could see was a bad one.

Manager Halloran on the bench suppressed a groan by picking up a handful of sand and letting it slip slowly through his fingers. A titter of laughter swept over the grand stand, but it was not unfriendly. The fans like to see a batter hit at the ball even if he strikes out.

The pitcher went through his contortions again and delivered a high, straight ball that had the speed of lightning. It was just about as high as Jackrabbit Hobbes' head and uncomfortably close. Hobbes stepped back and with an apparently clumsy motion

gave a short-arm jab that looked like an effort to hit himself on the ear. When the surprise was over Hobbes was half way to second base and the center fielder was chasing a line drive that had passed over second base at an altitude of four feet. Hobbes slid into the bag and a second behind him came the ball.

The grand stand was wild. It looked as if the score could surely be tied this time, even if the hit had been an accident. The signal was for the catcher to ~~bump~~ and get Jackrabbit Hobbes to third. Hobbes took a good lead and when he saw the bat extended started for third. The umpire roared, "Strike u-un," and Hobbes was nearly thrown out at second before he could return.

The next attempt was a foul. Hit and run was the signal, with two strikes on the batter. Hobbes took a good lead and started when the pitcher "wound up." "Strike thruh," he heard the umpire roar, and a second later he and the third baseman had made an embroidery pattern of their four legs. The ball was on the ground. It had been stopped, but Hobbes was safe. A sacrifice fly would do the work.

"Give us a pinch hitter," the grand stand howled, when the pitcher came to bat. Manager Halloran had pondered that very proposition, however, and decided that a man who was pitching a no-hit game could not be taken out in the sixth inning with only one run on the wrong side of the score sheet. Moreover, the pitcher might deliver a sacrifice fly.

The suspense was not long to be endured. The pitcher hit the first ball thrown and the second base garnered in what had been meant for the needed sacrifice fly. Thus it is that the best-laid plans go wrong and the grand stand is filled with men who know more baseball than the manager.

The next batter up struck out and Jackrabbit Hobbes trotted out to his position in the field, wondering why the other fellows couldn't hit when nearly every ball thrown was in easier reach than those he tackled.

No runs were made by either side until the ninth inning, when Jackrabbit Hobbes was to be the first batter up.

"Listen to me," growled Halloran, as the lanky Texan picked up his bat. "Use your head this time. You've got the eye all right, but wait him out. Here I've been

training you a month and you go right in and hit like you did the first time I ever saw you. Make him put 'em over. Wait him out. He'll give you a base on balls this time trying to make you fish at bad ones. You can't get off with that horse-shoe stuff forever. Show him you ain't a boob."

"Say, Hobbes," called Kibler, "can you swim?"

"No," admitted the lanky outfielder, puzzled.

"Then you better let those wide ones alone. That boy is trying to make you chase one into the water barrel and drown you."

These few words sent Jackrabbit Hobbes to the plate with a cotton string where his backbone had been. Instead of being a hero he realized with a bump that he was a joke in spite of his two hits. No wonder baseball players frequently refer to this sort of conversation as dynamite.

The first ball thrown was a high out-curve just where Hobbes liked to walk into them, but he let it pass and was rewarded by hearing the umpire call, "Ball u-un." The second one was in the same place. Jackrabbit Hobbes' mouth watered as he noted the delicious curve, just the kind he liked to reach up and slam.

"Ball tuh," growled the umpire.

"Slam one," shouted a fat man in the grand stand.

"Aw, say, bo, give us another hit," pleaded a ragged juvenile rooter.

"If that child gets peeved and musses up one of them wild pitches," a confident young floorwalker was saying to the banker beside him, "those guys in the garden'll wish they had motorcycles."

The next one came like a shot from a gun straight at Jackrabbit Hobbes' head. It was the sort he liked to poke his bat at and drop behind second base, but he had orders from the Czar, so he let it pass.

"Ball thruh," came from the nether depths of the umpire's stomach. Three balls and no strikes! The rooters saw their duty and decided to perform it. Pop bottles and heels were slammed against the long-suffering timbers of the grand stand, while others donated the right to speak above a whisper on the morrow in order to rattle the pitcher to-day.

Amid the din the pitcher delivered a

throw that split the plate. Only the lifting of the umpire's right hand told that it was a strike, for the volume of sound from the grand stand and bleachers was terrific. Unruffled by the efforts of his would-be tormentors, the pitcher shot another straight one across the plate. The situation was now too tense for noise. Men pushed their finger nails into the palms of their hands while the pitcher wound up. The silence was that of a cavern as the ball left his hand.

Jackrabbit Hobbes wanted to step back and knock the cover off it because it was aimed to pass within an inch of his stomach, but his instructions were to get a base on balls. So he held his bat loosely in his fingers. When not more than three feet from him the ball dodged with fiendish suddenness at least a foot out and cut across the inside corner. Jackrabbit Hobbes had struck out.

"Why didn't you mallerate that last one? It split the pan," remarked Halloran.

"It had loco weed on it," replied Hobbes. "The way to get a hit off that *hombre* is to put your brand on one of his cripples. When they go over the pan they're bound straight through for the catcher."

"That'll be enough out of you," growled the manager.

"I'll keep him on the bench for a month or two," Halloran told the sporting editor of the *Herald* that evening. "He's fine raw material and with training he'll make a great hitter."



THE Home Club left next day for its long mid-season trip. One month on the road, and the Club must win more than half its games to hold even third place! Second place which it now held was conceded as an unavoidable loss on such a long trip. But the team in first place also had a long trip ahead and could not increase its lead enough to cinch the pennant. The fans who work with pencils on the backs of business letters figured it out that the Home Club would return in third place, the League leaders would be in second place, and the team then in third place would be on top. All three percentages would be about the same and the last month of the season would decide which of the three teams would be on top on the last day.



FORTUNATELY for the human race, grief is an unnatural creation of the mind, as is proved by the fact that it abides the shortest time with children. Baby Myrtle's return to her natural interest in life came two weeks later, when she began reading again the news of the Home Club in the pink section of the *Herald*.

"How times have changed," was the meaning of the sigh that escaped her baby lips when she learned that Jackrabbit Hobbes had been warming a bench for two weeks without so much as a chance to try out. During the next two weeks Baby Myrtle noted that Jackrabbit Hobbes had been sent in several times as pinch hitter, but failed to deliver a hit, usually because he struck out. Baby Myrtle pondered this frequently, because the weak spots on the team were her special care. Being very much a little woman, she had to have something to worry about.

She discussed the matter with Henry, the soda pop man, who had taken her into his household of six children. But Henry, after the death of her father, lacked artistic temperament. He yearned only for the return of the team and greater consumption of soda pop. There were times when Baby Myrtle almost lost all patience with Henry because he seemed unable to think of anything but food for those six kids—as if they wouldn't be just as happy hungry if the Home Club were winning.

Whenever any one did mention Jackrabbit Hobbes it was to reflect the sentiments of Halloran. Perhaps it was the thought that Jackrabbit Hobbes was not quite so great as the other great men of the Home Club that put into Baby Myrtle's mind the daring to love him. Other American women have coveted crippled royalty. Anyway, she was that bold and looked first of all for his record in the box score of the game of the day before. Most of the time, however, he had no record.

The fans guessed nearly right about what the three leading teams would do on their trips. The return home found the Home Club in fourth place, with first and second and third within reach. This fact, however, brought little joy to Jackrabbit Hobbes on the bench. He would have been the gainer were there more defeats or even a man out of the line-up.

On the first day at home Hobbes stopped

at Henry's soda pop stand to get a cigar and actually leaned on Baby Myrtle's cash register. For a second she wondered if he had read her secret and was about to speak to her. If any such thing happened she was sure it would prove fatal, for already her heart was thumping away at a tremendous pace. But he didn't.

"Guess I'll be driving an ice wagon soon," said Hobbes to the man with whom he had been talking. He was evidently making no secret of his disappointment. Baby Myrtle yearned to cheer him up. He looked so blue, and daddy had always said a man simply couldn't hit "when he had his tail between his legs."

After the game that evening when she had returned to the home of Henry the soda pop man, she gathered together her courage and lifted the telephone receiver. Hadn't she heard other young women talk under similar circumstances? Very well; he needn't know she was a baby. Why, women had even called daddy over the telephone when they might have known he was married and had a baby girl.

"Is this Mr. Hobbes?" cooed Baby Myrtle when a gruff, "Hullo," told her she had the right number.

"Yes."

"Oh, Mr. Hobbes," sighed Baby Myrtle, "I hope you'll excuse me, but I've wanted to meet you ever so long. I think you're just grand," with the accent on the last word.

"Who is this?" demanded Hobbes, suspecting his teammates of a prank.

"I can't tell you," protested Baby Myrtle, assuming the voice of a young woman of twenty.

"Why not?" demanded Hobbes, delighted but doubtful.

"Well, you'd never like me after I acted like this."

"Oh, can that," replied Jackrabbit Hobbes gallantly. "That's all right. We couldn't meet any other way. Do you go to the baseball games?"

"Every day," answered Baby Myrtle. "I wish you'd play oftener. I'd like it better."

"Say, where can I meet you?" asked Hobbes, growing bolder.

"Oh, you just mustn't meet me," protested Baby Myrtle. "It can't happen; that's why I'm calling you on the 'phone to tell you how much I like you."

"Why mustn't I meet you?" persisted Hobbes.

"Because my papa wouldn't like it," was the undiplomatic reply.

"Who is your papa?" asked Hobbes, growing artful in his determination to find this unexcelled judge of men.

"He's a banker," fibbed Baby Myrtle, driven to the wall.

"Where do you sit at the games?" asked Hobbes, taking a new tack.

"Why, Mr. Hobbes—" wistfully and reprovingly—"you might as well ask me my name. I'm going to ring off now, but I'll call you some other time."

"Wait a minute," Hobbes was protesting, when he heard the click of her receiver as it fell into place.

Jackrabbit Hobbes stood there, holding his own receiver and grinning in a manner not unlike a ten-year-old's until Central brought him back to life with a vicious buzz and told him to "hang up." Then the horrible thought that he "had fallen for it" if it should turn out a prank smote him, and he went out to meet the other members of the Home Club, determined to murder the first man who "made a crack."

Whatever hope of beauty Jackrabbit Hobbes might have had was ruined long ago when a bucking horse brought his cheek against a barbed wire fence and left a scar that would have been the pride of a Roman gladiator. But hope springs eternal, and not even so unspoiled a man as Hobbes was immune from the belief that a woman might possibly fall victim to his charms.



CUPID peered from between each pair of fence pickets as Jackrabbit Hobbes rode to the baseball park the following morning for practise. The cares of a beginner in baseball had slipped lightly from his shoulders, and he was living again the only two minutes of his life that seriously involved a woman. On his arrival he found the sporting editor of the *Herald*, Halloran, Kibler, and several of the pitchers busy with an improvised device for measuring curves. Walking over to the grand stand he found a twenty-two-caliber rifle, a shooting-jacket, a pair of automobile goggles and a lunch basket.

The sporting editor had been out in the country that morning. Next to a bat and ball Jackrabbit Hobbes loved firearms, which is natural enough since he was reared

in a house that contained as many guns as dinner plates. Hobbes couldn't remember when he had killed his first deer—nor his hundredth, for that matter. This was a particularly well made gun and he was admiring all its details. In the course of his examination he had placed ten cartridges in the magazine when the curve-testing was interrupted by Bear Brown, the burly center fielder, stepping in with a bat and knocking one of the sample curves sky high.

Quick as a flash Jackrabbit Hobbes wheeled with his gun and fired three shots. With each discharge the sphere varied a few inches in its course. When it was picked up, riddled, the little party laughed heartily, and Hobbes proceeded with the task of taking the remaining cartridges out of the gun.

When sporting editors call at morning practise they are frequently allowed broad liberties, especially if they are the sort of sporting editors who can make judges talk diamond slang from the bench and ministers forget to denounce desecration of the Sabbath in order to watch the percentage column. Seeing that his part of the program was likely to be interrupted that day, Jackrabbit Hobbes started a game with the ubiquitous flock of worshipers in short trousers who inhabit all baseball parks not most carefully guarded. The boys scattered out and Hobbes was hitting the ball to them. Presently the sporting editor deserted his curve test and wandered over to watch Hobbes. The boys were returning the ball in all sorts of ways, sometimes higher than his head and again on the bounce. Whether it came high or low or to the right or left Hobbes was sending it back with his bat to the boy whose turn it was to receive.

"Are you ambidextrous?" asked the sporting editor, noting the turns of his bat from his right to his left side.

"What's a matter, d'ye say?" stammered Hobbes.

"Do you use your left hand as well as your right?" asked the mighty scribe.

"Just about," replied Hobbes, without interrupting the sport.

"Halloran," said the scribe excitedly, when he had returned to the other party, "I believe Jackrabbit Hobbes is a phenom.; I believe he's just naturally a hittin' fool an' a battin' fiend."

Halloran's look was answer enough.

"Put him in to-morrow," the sporting editor suggested, "and let's have another look at him."

"All right," agreed Halloran, "but he ain't ripe yet; no head."

The sporting editor departed and morning practise was taken up. At its conclusion Halloran called Hobbes to him.

"I'm going to put you in the line-up to-morrow, so you come out in the morning and let Bear Brown pitch to you for an hour or so. The *Herald* boy likes you, so now you do your best to-morrow and I'll try to keep you in for a while."

Jackrabbit Hobbes nodded and walked home on air, thinking how he might communicate the news to the young woman who would be most interested. At the same time the young woman who would be most interested was counting minutes until evening when she might call him on the telephone again.

When the game was over that afternoon and the cash counted by Henry the soda pop man, Baby Myrtle ran all the way home, then sat by the telephone looking at the clock until it struck seven.

"Hello, this is me," she said, when Hobbes answered the call.

"Is it?" stumbled Jackrabbit Hobbes, forgetting what he had wanted to say.

"You didn't play to-day," Baby Myrtle reproached.

"Do you want me to play to-morrow?" asked Hobbes.

"Of course I do," sighed Baby Myrtle.

Jackrabbit Hobbes was happier than he had ever been before in his life.

"I want you to make two hits if you come up three times, or three hits out of four times," ordered the enchantress.

"All right," agreed Jackrabbit Hobbes, confident of the highly improbable, even as other knights have been when under the spell of Eve.

"I've got to go now. Good-by," cooed Baby Myrtle.

Hobbes heard the receiver click. Would she call again? He hoped so. She would almost have to if he got the hits she demanded.



FOR dramatic purposes games should always be won in the ninth inning, but it is a matter of record that most of them are won in the seventh. With a single and a base on balls to his

credit, Hobbes came up in the seventh, having been warned to "wait him out." Kibler was on second and Bear Brown on third.

The first ball thrown split the plate. The second did likewise. Both were low and fast. This was new tactics on the part of a pitcher, who had already discovered that Jackrabbit Hobbes fattened his batting average on high wild pitches. The third ball thrown was also over the plate, but purposely too low for a strike.

Hobbes, however, was afraid to let anything even faintly resembling a strike get by. He smashed it with the end of his bat and a second later the third baseman hit the ground in a sitting posture after a vain jump. There was a resounding smack when the ball hit the left field fence and the fielder caught it as it bounced back.

Jackrabbit Hobbes was held on first by the quickness of the play while Kibler was treading on the heels of big Bear Brown as they crossed the plate together. With two runs to the good that game was sewed up. When it was over the sporting editor and Halloran rode back to the city together.

"Well, what do you think of him?" asked the writer.

"Every time the lad goes to bat all the lucky saints take him by the hand," was Halloran's comment, "but you can't leave a man on the bench when he's battin' a thousand at this stage of the game. I'll leave him in till he stumps."

"This game puts us back in third place. Five games to get to the top," mused the sporting editor.

"Five games and a half," corrected Halloran.

"That's right," agreed the sporting editor, recalling the difference of one in the number of games played by the Home Club and the League leaders.

One after another the teams of the League called to contest for a place in the first division, and very slowly the Home Club forged ahead. At the end of ten games they had taken second place. Twenty games found them secure for the season in second place, with four and a half games to win before they could tie for first place. Then came the cellar champions of the League and lost four straight games. Half a game was the margin between first and second place when the League leaders called.

Business almost stopped for that series. The street car company was apologizing for

its lack of rolling stock to handle the crowds expeditiously. The purchase or ownership of hats for half the male population of two cities would be settled by this fateful series.

The first game went to the Visitors and Hobbes went home that evening broken-hearted. Such were the necessities of the game when he had come to bat that he was credited with two sacrifice bunts and a base on balls. The score was two to one. Though the official score showed no times at bat for Jackrabbit Hobbes, he knew he had faced the pitcher three times without a hit. Bases on balls where he learned to play were not coveted. They were regarded as lost opportunities. But the world looked brighter when the telephone rang and a sweet voice said:

"I excuse you, Mr. Hobbes, for not getting a hit. I think you did fine, but I hope you won't have to bunt again to-morrow. If you'll make two hits I'll just love you to death."

"If I get half a chanst," threatened Hobbes, "I'll bunt it down some one's throat to-morrow and knock all his teeth out. When am I going to get a chanst to meet you?" demanded Hobbes.

"Do you sure enough love me, Mr. Hobbes?" Baby Myrtle asked, with a yearning that made denial impossible.

"I sure do," declared Hobbes.

"Ain't that just grand!" Baby Myrtle exclaimed, almost forgetting her rôle of young lady.

"That don't answer my question," Hobbes persisted.

"Well," faltered Baby Myrtle, racking her wits and sparring for time, "if you make two hits to-morrow I'll tell you when. I must go now. Good-by."

As usual the receiver clicked before Hobbes could protest.



PLAYERS and fans were beginning to note the change in Hobbes. He was as cheerful as a June day, with no end of boyish fun; and his neckwear and shirts were beginning to follow the magazine advertisements of correct attire. Even his baseball suits were most carefully laundered much more frequently than there was any need for. From a shy and gawky country boy he had become a young man of astonishing self-confidence. Even his mistakes under the circumstances were

smiled upon sympathetically instead of making him the butt of sarcastic jibes. Halloran said he had the swelled head. The sporting editor claimed all the credit and said it was because he had been given a chance to try out.

Only Jackrabbit Hobbes knew why he had changed, but even he didn't realize how much. Baby Myrtle just took it for granted that he should be a topic of conversation. She saw no change in him except that he was getting hits to please her, and she took it for granted that any real hero would hit "five hundred" day after day to please a lady. How was she to know that League records that were decades in the making were being smashed because she was carrying on a telephone flirtation?

The baseball park could barely accommodate its crowd of fans, all wild-eyed with excitement when the umpire called "Play ball" next day. There were but three games of this final series. If the Visitors won to-day, all was lost. They were now a game and a half in the lead with but this game and one more to play. They had saved a youthful star pitcher for the game, one who was already sold to a bigger league. He was a bit wild in the first inning as a result of too much responsibility and passed the first two men.

Hobbes beat out a bunt. Bear Brown slammed the ball into deep center for three bases, and that game was "on ice." That was why the crowd wondered and Halloran swore most outrageously when Jackrabbit Hobbes refused to accept a base on balls in the eighth inning with the score three to zero, but insisted on reaching over his head after a high fourth ball and dropping it safely just behind the second base. The score was unchanged, three to nothing.

Hobbes could not sit down to wait for his telephone call that evening, but walked up and down his hot little hotel room, chewing excitedly on the end of a cigar. When the telephone rang it sounded loud enough for all the city to have heard.

"Hullo," he growled, by way of showing how self-possessed he was.

"Hello, Mr. Hobbes," said the softly musical voice of Baby Myrtle.

"Oh, hello there," with a note of recognition.

"Do you love me, Mr. Hobbes?"

"Of course I do."

"Well, tell me so, and don't always be making me ask you," peevishly.

"I love you," stammered Hobbes.

"Oh, that's so nice," said Baby Myrtle rapturously.

"I made those two hits; like to not got the second one. Remember what you said?" asked Jackrabbit Hobbes.

"Yes," faltered Baby Myrtle.

"Well?" demanded Hobbes.

"To-morrow's the last game," Baby Myrtle began.

"Yes, and if I can't meet you to-morrow I'm going back to the ranch for the Winter."

"Oh, my goodness!" exclaimed Baby Myrtle. "Well, to-morrow if you make a home run I'll come to you and introduce myself and you can kiss me," Baby Myrtle promised.

"It's a go," agreed Hobbes.

It mattered not to him that there were pitchers on the opposing side who were paid twice his salary to prevent men from knocking home runs. The reward was too big for thought of failure to enter his mind.

"Good-by," said Baby Myrtle, and the receiver clicked into place.



MANAGERS made the rounds that night at ten o'clock to see that every man was in bed on time. An early edition of the *Herald* told what they had for breakfast and who would pitch. At nine o'clock in the morning tickets were on sale and at noon the players were warned about food lest any one should be in bad condition.

When the umpire announced the batteries Manager Halloran could not suppress a groan.

Hop-Ball Rogers, the tall underhand southpaw twirler, was slated to go to the mound for the Visitors. Steady old Goodwin would pitch for the Home Club. He was chosen because he never lost his head and could be depended upon to get a hit, which put nine men in the attack as well as the defense.

The deciding game of the series found batters nervous instead of pitchers. Hobbes met something new in a hop ball. The first time up he fouled out to the catcher. The next time up he slammed one with all his strength and nearly collapsed when he saw the second baseman getting under his high fly. At the end of the sixth inning the

Home Club had no hits. The Visitors had three, but no runs. Goodwin was invincible in the pinches.

In the first half of the seventh the Visitors got their first man on base—a scratch infield hit. A sacrifice sent him to second. Another bunt placed him on third, but the runner made first and it went for a hit. He was permitted to steal second. With a steady batter up the squeeze play was signaled. It worked perfectly and a runner crossed the plate. The man on second was a slow runner and the catcher threw to third. The man on first tried to take second on the play. He was run down between first and second but the man on third came home. It looked as if the great Home Club had blown up. Steady old Goodwin made the next man whiff and the terrible seventh was ended.

The hop ball worked effectively in the seventh and eighth innings. Goodwin was the last man to strike out. The ninth opened with Kibler up. Despairing of a hit, he bunted the first ball thrown. It rolled down the first base line, the pitcher after it. Half way to the base it crossed the chalk line, foul, and the pitcher slowed his pace; then it hit a pebble and rolled back in. Kibler was safe. Big Deacon Wilson, whose massive frame had taken him from the theological seminary to the diamond, was next up. He bunted down the first base line. Both pitcher and first baseman went after it. When the first baseman turned to throw it, the second baseman was running toward the bag. Deacon Wilson crossed it first. Two men on and none out. There is nothing better than the bunt to cause confusion.

When Jackrabbit Hobbes had selected the young telephone pole with which he batted he stooped beside Halloran a moment, apparently to pick up a handful of sand.

"Bunt," said Halloran.

"I'm afraid to," ventured Hobbes. "I'll pop to the pitcher on that hop ball. Lemme sacrifice fly?"

This was treason so rank it actually amused Halloran in its supreme impudence.

"All right, horseshoes," he said, "but hit it out."

Jackrabbit Hobbes marched to the plate. Hop Ball Rogers knew him for a dangerous man. Moreover, three men on bases would give a much better chance for a double play. The first ball thrown was wide. Hobbes let it pass as a sop to Halloran.

"Ball u-un," roared the umpire, and the crowd yelled with delight at the admission of the prowess of their batter. The second was in the same place. Hobbes let it pass. Then it was he realized with terror that he was being given a base on balls. This would be his last chance to bat.

The next one was in the same place. Being wide it had no hop. It was not intended to deceive the batter. Hobbes reached up and bent all his energy against it. The right fielder turned at the crack of the bat and started toward the fence. Kibler and Deacon Wilson had their signals and stood ready to run with the catch.



THERE is a great deal of mystery about where that ball went. It never was recovered, though it would be a much prized relic. Hobbes sold his bat for charity and it provided twenty beds in an orphan asylum. It now hangs beneath the folds of an American flag, with a card telling of its honorable service.

The right fielder of the Visitors threw his glove in the air as the ball passed over the fence, and the crowd broke through the wire netting in front of the grand stand so they could greet Jackrabbit Hobbes as he crossed the plate, pushing Kibler and Deacon Wilson ahead of him. But ahead of all those who came from the grand stand ran Baby Myrtle, wild-eyed with excitement and fear that he would be lost in the surging mass of humanity. As he crossed the plate Baby Myrtle grabbed his hand in both hers.

"I want my kiss," she said.

He swung her up lightly and kissed her.

"Do you still love me?" she asked. He recognized the voice.

"Of course I do," he declared. "Say, aren't you Pap Mullins's little girl that's been living with Henry?"

"Did you know me all the time?" exclaimed Baby Myrtle.

"No, but I know you now. Don't you want to be my little girl?"

"Oh, Mr. Hobbes!" was all Baby Myrtle could say, but she held to his left hand while he shook hands with the crowd. Halloran came up and slapped Hobbes on the shoulder, which meant many volumes of eulogy.

"When you get through come over here," he called. "I want you to meet Jack Burke. He's scout for the Giants. He wants to meet you."



HIS PERFECT PLAN

by
Scammon Lockwood

IT WOULD be impossible to say exactly when the idea first came to Coulter Stratham that he must kill Wesley McNeill. Possibly it was the evening after he had made over to McNeill the most valuable piece of real estate in Chicago, on Michigan Avenue between Monroe and Adams Streets. It was certainly then that he began to see how completely McNeill had outgeneraled him at all points, and, temporarily at least, he had felt helpless to make a move, so sure was he that it would only be met by a counter move that would still further weaken his own position and still further strengthen McNeill's.

But this much justice should be done him at the very start. When the idea did first enter his head, he expelled it instantly, violently, very much as the human system seeks through a powerful sneeze to expel the disease germ that is trying to effect a permanent lodgment. He was naturally a good, normal, healthy-minded human being, and he instinctively shrank from murder, just as the healthy body shrinks from disease and valiantly opposes its first attacks.

But as time passed the moral fiber of the man became more and more weakened by his misfortunes. It is true that they were only the result of his own bad judgment, but to his mind they were solely the result of a deliberate effort on the part of Wesley McNeill to ruin him.

Then one evening he was calling at McNeill's house, and in a single flash he was shown exactly how he could do the deed, with absolutely no chance of its ever being traced to him, with practically no chance of its ever being known that old Wesley McNeill, "the war horse of the Pit," had even been murdered, so like self-destruction would all the attendant circumstances appear. That they were opponents in the Pit, always to be found on opposite sides of the market, had not as yet affected their social relations. The outward semblance of amity had been preserved, even after the Michigan Avenue deal. People who did not know the undercurrents of La Salle Street supposed them to be friends.

On this particular occasion Stratham had called to see McNeill rather late in the evening. It was humiliating that always

he should be the seeker and McNeill the dispenser of favors, he was thinking to himself as he climbed the high stoop and pulled the old-fashioned bell knob. McNeill had gone to bed, the servant told him. But he knew McNeill's notorious habit of going to bed early and reading himself to sleep, and he asked permission to go up anyhow. The servant left him a moment and returned with the word that Stratham might go up.

McNeill was lying in bed, a flaring gas jet behind him, and a copy of "My Danish Sweetheart" in his hand. His taste in reading was what might be expected of the man. He liked Kipling, and Stevenson, and London, and the sea stories of W. Clark Russell. He liked action and quantities of gore in his reading.

Though he had a hobby for saving gas and would permit no one else in his house to burn any more than was absolutely necessary, one of the charming inconsistencies in the old Scotchman's character was that night after night his own jet burned long after he had fallen asleep, sometimes until morning. These were matters of common knowledge, for Wesley McNeill was a man of more than a little prominence in Chicago. He was one of those well known men that editors bear in mind as always promising something extra good in the way of a story.



AS STRATHAM looked at McNeill, even before the conventional greetings had been exchanged, bearing in mind what he knew of the old man's habits, he saw how he might do the deed that would forever remove his most dangerous business opponent.

Yet even then, with kicks and curses, with the anger that showed him to be weakening, he drove the thought from his mind.

But the thought kept recurring. After he had completed his business with McNeill and was on his way home, it presented itself in another light. It was an absolutely new way of committing murder. Surely a man might contemplate such a curiosity without any injury to his conscience. After five thousand years (or more) of murders, practically all of them following conventional methods, it tickled his vanity to think that he had the originality of mind to invent an absolutely new way for breaking the much fractured Sixth Commandment. He permitted his mind to dwell

upon it, just as the healthy body continues recklessly to sit in the draft that ultimately results in its complete destruction by tuberculosis.

And so, regarding his idea merely as an interesting, artistic emanation, he felt that he had a perfect right to dwell upon it, and to be pleased by its combined simplicity, ingenuity and certain effectiveness. The idea of using it was, after all, the evil one. That he had dismissed forever. Oh, he was quite positive that he had dismissed it forever. So he found a peculiar pleasure in dwelling upon the new scheme, in elaborating the few necessary precautions so that there was absolutely no chance for detection even should he be suspected.

But all that had been months ago. Now he found himself staring with wide eyes into a ruined future. For Wesley McNeill was running a corner in corn, and he, Coulter Stratham, was, as usual, on the wrong side of the market. He and his allies had fought with all their resources. With the courage and blind recklessness of despair they had flung their all into the pit.

But the Napoleonic mind of Wesley McNeill had figured out months before exactly what those resources were, and he could have told them months before that the fight was hopeless, just as a genius at the chessboard can figure out an inevitable checkmate many moves before any one else can see it.

It was this silent and apparently resistless power which irritated Stratham, which, in the language of the day, "got his goat." He told himself that he wouldn't mind being ruined in a fair fight out in the open. It was the silent working of forces which he couldn't understand that infuriated him.

To-morrow, Wesley McNeill would send for him, or he himself would meekly beg an audience, and terms would be made. The most favorable terms possible would mean absolute bankruptcy. There was only one chance of salvation. Between the opening and closing of the Board of Trade on the morrow there was just one chance in a thousand that Wesley McNeill's corner in corn might collapse. There was just one chance in a thousand of this, and that one chance would be made an absolute certainty should Wesley McNeill die over night.

Without his master brain to direct the operations of his brokers, Wesley McNeill's

corner could be smashed. That was certain. So now Coulter Stratham was ready to yield to his temptation. Like the minute bacillus that enters the healthy human system in a casual breath or glass of water, and ends by polluting the whole, so this idea had come to Coulter Stratham while normal and healthy-minded, and while it got only the most precarious lodgment had ended by corrupting his entire mind. It now seemed wholly just and right that he should kill his enemy.

II



IT WAS three o'clock on a Wednesday afternoon in February. The windows and doors of Stratham's private office in the Postal Telegraph Building were closed. Though outside, elevated trains roared, and wagons rumbled over the Belgian blocks on La Salle Street, within it was very quiet. Even the ticker, as if worn out with its unusually vigorous morning's work, gave only an occasional convulsive rattle, as it recorded some market triviality.

As Stratham sat at his desk, buried in thought, he did not look at all like a man sick with the bacillus of a horrible crime, any more than a man who has just contracted pneumonia looks any different from what he looked an hour before. Past fifty, he still had plenty of iron-gray hair, a clear eye, a good complexion, and a fine, erect six feet of well knit body.

Now that he was determined on his course, he felt no confusion of mind as to his mode of procedure. Months before, when he had considered the idea purely as an interesting abstraction, he had worked out every detail. But, to make all certain, he drew toward him a memorandum pad and jotted down brief notes of the things he must do. Then he took a fresh sheet, rearranged them in proper sequence, and burned his original. The copy he folded and placed in his vest pocket. Then he took the telephone directory and turned to the classified pages and looked for the word "crutches." He found only one name under that classification.

He made a mental memorandum of the address, closed the book, put on his hat and coat, walked to Wabash Avenue, boarded a Cottage Grove Avenue car and got off at Thirty-fifth Street. He walked half a block and entered a store whose sign read,

"Crutches and Invalid Chairs." A clerk came forward, his head bent inquiringly.

"My name is J. R. Adkins," said Stratham. "I'm from Streator, Ill."

The clerk nodded as if very much interested.

"I want a wheel chair like this one," and he pointed to one that stood near them; "only I want it made in English walnut. It's for my mother. Her house is all furnished in English walnut and she insists that she won't have a wheel chair unless it's uniform with the rest of her furniture."

"It would have to be made special," said the clerk.

"Yes, I supposed so. What I wanted to know is the cost."

"I'll have to figure on it a moment."

"All right, I'll wait." The clerk nodded and returned to the rear of the store. Stratham sat in one of the wheel chairs. He particularly selected one which stood near a rack of cheap crutches.

Stratham waited a moment, and then reached out his hand and picked up one of the crutches. He toyed with it idly for a while and then laid it across his knees. He slid it along until his right hand covered the rubber cap on the end. He pulled the cap off, put it in his pocket, and shortly returned the crutch to its place. Soon the clerk returned and named a price for the chair. Stratham thanked him, told him he would probably receive an order by mail in a few days, and departed.

He walked along Cottage Grove Avenue until he came to one of those small shops where they repair anything from a broken umbrella rib to an automobile. He saw a few electric lamp shades in the window and these gave him an idea. Inside he found a young girl in charge. He wanted a green porcelain globe for a hanging electric light and the opening at the top must be exactly four inches. He knew that none were made of that size. The girl measured every shade in the shop. They were all two and one-quarter inches or three and one-quarter. She was quite astonished at the discovery and so was Coulter Stratham.

Finally she went downstairs, where she said there were more shades in a barrel, and while she was gone Stratham had not the slightest difficulty in abstracting a small monkey wrench from the littered work table behind the counter. When the girl returned he said he would try to make a

globe with a three-and-one-quarter-inch opening do. She wrapped one up. He paid her seventy-five cents, went out and carried the shade only as far as the first alley, where he relentlessly smashed it into an ash barrel.

He had thus obtained two of his lethal instruments without purchasing or in any way indicating that he wished such articles, and in both cases he felt sure that their loss would not be immediately noticed, perhaps never. He felt entirely satisfied that he had not left a trail which even the imaginary genius of Sherlock Holmes could follow.

His next call was at the place of a wholesale dealer in sporting goods. Here he was Henry Watkins of Watertown, Wis. He owned a hardware store and had run out of jointed wooden cleaning-rods for shot guns. He had quite a demand for these as he was in the duck- and goose-shooting region and the season would soon be opening up. He would need about one-fourth of a gross. He was going right over to the train and would take them with him.

He paid cash, took his rather bulky package, and walked to a taxi stand. He was just about to get into a cab that stood ready, when it suddenly occurred to him that a better precaution would be to take the trolley. So he walked to Wabash Avenue, boarded an Indiana Avenue car, got off at Forty-fourth Street, and walked to his home on Michigan Avenue between Forty-fourth and Forty-fifth Streets.

He left the package of cleaning-rods on the basement steps and then let himself in by the front entrance.



HE WAS a widower, with only one child, a son of twenty-two who was never home in the afternoon, and frequently not during the evening. So he had no fear of being observed by any one but a servant, or his housekeeper, a woman of fifty who was not altogether devoid of curiosity. But as his plans required absolute secrecy, he took precautions to avoid all observation.

So he assured himself that the servants and the housekeeper were busy about their duties, and then went down to the basement door, brought in the bundle of cleaning-rods, and carried them up to his bedroom, together with an old saw that was used for odd jobs about the house. Each rod was in three pieces, with threaded metal tips,

by which they screwed together. He laid aside the middle section of each rod, a piece of round maple about one-half inch in diameter and fifteen inches long, with a threaded metal tip at one end and a threaded socket at the other. Then he sawed off the metal tips of the other sections and made a package of them. The wooden pieces remaining he took down into the basement and threw into the furnace.

Returning, he took the thirty-six center sections and tried screwing them together. They fitted perfectly. He did not join them all, as that would have made a rod over forty feet long and there was not space enough in his room.

He now got out the rubber crutch-cap which he had pilfered so skilfully at the store of the maker of invalid chairs, and tried it on an end of one of the rods. It was much too large. So he stuffed newspaper into the hole in the rubber cap and thus made it fit so tightly that there was no danger of its falling off.

Satisfied with these preparations, he unscrewed the rods, made a compact package of them, and placed it with the saw and the stolen monkey wrench in a drawer of his dressing-table, which had a moderately housemaid-proof lock. He turned the key, took it out and put it in his left-hand trousers pocket.

He looked out of the window and saw that the gray Winter afternoon was beginning to close into evening. He wondered if there would be a moon, and at the same moment remembered that there had been a full moon about two weeks before.

The night would be dark. Excellent. It was not important, but it was a point in his favor. He noted that particularly, and his mind, eager for an omen, made one of it.

He took his overcoat and hat and the package containing the metal tips which he had sawed off the discarded portions of his cleaning-rods, went down to his library, sat in a chair facing one of the bookcases, and pondered a moment.

What he must do here was not so easy as he had anticipated. He wanted a very interesting novelette of about forty thousand words—something that a man would not lay aside until he had finished, and yet not so well known that Wesley McNeill would have already seen it.

He finally selected Octave Feuillet's "Romance of a Poor Young Man," though

he hesitated long between that and Daudet's "Tartarin of Tarascon."

He felt sure that this was outside of the beaten track of McNeill's reading, and that there was little possibility of his ever having heard of it. Yet at the same time he was sure that even McNeill, once started on the tale, would not lay it aside until he had finished the last page.

He glanced at his watch, read ten pages and again noted the time. Calculating from this, he figured that a moderately rapid reader would get through the story in about two hours.

Then he arose and left the house, taking with him the book and the package of metal tips from the cleaning-rods. By the shortest route he rode to the Halsted Street lift bridge and from it dropped this package into the water. Though it was February, there was in the center of the river a narrow channel free from any but drifting ice. The weight of the metal tips caused the package to sink at once.

Then he took a car downtown, went to his club, and telephoned his housekeeper that he would not be home for dinner. He asked if McNeill was in the club, but received a negative reply, so he called up the other and made an appointment at McNeill's house for eight-thirty.

Fully satisfied with these arrangements, he allowed himself to be captured and held as a dinner companion by Eadsburg, the club gossip.

After dinner he lounged around a while and left the club in time to arrive at McNeill's, on Drexel Boulevard, near Forty-first Street, shortly after eight-thirty.

III

 McNEILL was playing billiards. At this time any evening in the past ten years a visitor would have found him playing billiards, so Stratham was not in the least surprised. The particular territory devoted to this fine game was the front basement room. It was reached by a stairway which came down (or went up) under the stairs which led to the second floor of the house. At the foot of this stairway, to the left as one went down, was a window looking out upon a paved passage, and to the right was the door to the billiard room.

Stratham had noted all these details

many times, and to-night as he descended the stairs he merely checked up his remembrance of them and found it absolutely correct.

McNeill's opponent was young Andrew McNeill, his favorite nephew. As Stratham entered, Wesley was in the middle of a run and as excited about it as a boy playing marbles for keeps. There was a bet of fifty cents on the game and the old man of the Pit wanted that fifty cents just as much as he wanted the millions which his corner in corn promised to produce.

Four fan-tip gas burners stretched over the table. Electricity had never been installed in Wesley McNeill's house. That was a luxury which he promised his wife for their new house, soon to be started. Just now his wife and two daughters were in Florida. Parsimonious to a degree in most matters, he was fairly indulgent with them.

Stratham watched him dance eagerly around the billiard-table and wondered how the tremendous mind that must be concealed in that smallish, bullet-shaped head, could take such an interest in such a trifle. He did not realize that one reason for McNeill's success was that he took a tremendous interest in everything he attempted.

Presently McNeill missed a difficult three-cushion gather shot and marked up a run of seventeen. He then turned to Stratham.

"Let us finish the game," he said. "Andy lacks but twenty-five and I forty."

"Why, certainly," Stratham answered. "Play another one, too. I like to watch."

"You'll take a stick yourself in the next one—unless you're in a hurry to get down to business."

McNeill added this latter as a sort of afterthought. He understood, or thought he understood, exactly what Stratham's business was. A man caught in a corner always tries to make terms before the final crash comes, just as a military leader seeks a favorable surrender before the enemy takes his city by storm and puts it to sack.

"All right; lots of time," and Stratham seated himself on a lounge that ran along the front windows, and pretended to feel in his vest pocket for a cigar. He immediately rose.

"Guess I left my cigars in my overcoat," he said, starting toward the door.

"Here's one," broke in young Andrew McNeill.

"Thanks, but if it's just the same I'll get one of my own—used to them." And Stratham went out and upstairs to his overcoat. He fumbled in the pockets a moment, not because there were any cigars there, but merely to make his performance perfect, just as a fine actor puts little touches into his work that are never appreciated or even known of by any one but himself.

He finally took a cigar from his vest pocket and again started down to the billiard room. The stairway and hall were almost pitch dark. One of McNeill's odd hobbies was a fearful care about wasting gas, and all the servants were very particular about humoring his hobbies. Hence no gas burned in this house except where it was actually needed.

As he passed the window at the foot of the stairs, Stratham reached out his left hand and slid back the catch. Half a second perhaps it took. He hardly had to hesitate in his stride. And then he reëntered the billiard room.

This time young McNeill was making a short run.



"EVER read 'The Romance of a Poor Young Man,' by Octave Feuillet?" Stratham asked, as they watched the balls.

"Never heard of it."

"I brought it over for you."

"Thanks. I'll start on it to-night. I always read myself to sleep."

Stratham knew this perfectly well. His plan depended, partly at least, on this peculiarity of Wesley McNeill's.

"If you start on it, you'll finish it," he said.

"How long is it?"

"Oh, you could get through in an hour and a half."

"Just right," and McNeill began eagerly to shoot, his nephew having left him a "set up."

They played one more game and then Stratham and the elder McNeill went upstairs, leaving young Andrew alone to knock the balls around.

Their talk was brief. McNeill stated his terms and Stratham asked that they be left open until fifteen minutes before the Board opened in the morning. This was granted, and both men went out into the

hall. While Stratham was getting into his overcoat, young Andrew McNeill came upstairs from the billiard room.

"Through for the night, Andy?" asked his uncle.

Young McNeill nodded.

"Arm's gone stiff," he said.

"Did you turn out the gas?"

The old Scotchman saw no incongruity in turning from a matter involving millions to a question of two cents' worth of wasted gas. The whole town might laugh at him for it, but that made no difference to Wesley McNeill. Once, prowling about the house late at night, he discovered a tip burning in one of the servant's rooms. The servant was discharged the next morning and several of the papers had semi-humorous accounts of the incident, so that in this case the whole town really did laugh at him.

Therefore Stratham was not in the least surprised when McNeill asked his nephew if the latter had turned out the gas.

Young McNeill seemed to hesitate a moment, and then he merely said, "Yes, certainly."

"All right; lock the door."

Young McNeill closed, locked and bolted the door leading to the basement stairs.

"You keep that secure," said Stratham.

"Yes; the thieves can break into the basement all they please," McNeill replied, "but they can't get up here."

Stratham made no reply, but drew forth the small volume he had taken from his own library that evening.

"Here's the story I told you about," he said, as he offered the book to McNeill.

"Thanks; I'll read it to-night."

"How you can sleep at all to-night is beyond me."

McNeill laughed. "The reason I can do business in the daytime is because I forget it absolutely at night. I read myself to sleep almost always."

"You won't go to sleep until you've finished that story."

"So much the better. Then I'll drop off peaceful as a baby."

They all exchanged "good-nights" and Stratham went straight home, first noting as he left McNeill's house that it was exactly ten o'clock.

He was far from certain that his plan was going to work, though he was still absolutely sure that, if it did, there would be absolutely no danger of detection.

In his room he unlocked the drawer containing the bundle of cleaning-rod sections, took them and the monkey wrench out and relocked the drawer, leaving the saw in it.

He sat and smoked for perhaps an hour, and then quietly left the house, taking his bundle and his monkey wrench with him.



HE WENT immediately to McNeill's, and looked up at the window of the old man's bedroom. A thrill went through him, the thrill of primordial man hunting his kind, as he saw that the light was still burning, for it told him that probably he would not be denied his prey. He took out his watch, puffed his cigar into a bright glow, and noted the time. It was just twenty minutes past twelve.

This is what he calculated had happened. McNeill had gone to his room, closed the door, as was his custom, gone to bed and read "The Romance of a Poor Young Man." He had had plenty of time to finish it, so the light in his room indicated that he had fallen asleep either before he finished it, or just as soon as he had read the last page.

One of the windows of McNeill's room was down about eighteen inches from the top. This also was in accordance with his regular habit. It had been that way on the night that Stratham's scheme had leaped full grown into his head.

Stratham undid his package of rod-sections and screwed them together. Jointed, they made a fairly rigid pole about forty feet long. This was longer than necessary, so he took off about ten feet.

Then putting the pole up to McNeill's open window, the rubber tip rendering it perfectly noiseless, he gently shoved the window closed. Then he waited. If McNeill was awake, he would surely notice the closing of his window and make some sort of a demonstration. Ten seconds, twenty, thirty, a minute passed. Nothing happened.

Stratham unjointed his pole and took a look around the house. Not another light burned anywhere. Of this he had felt certain in advance, for every one in McNeill's house took good care not to go counter to any of his hobbies, or near hobbies. But he walked the round of the house merely to assure himself that no one had made this

night an exception to the regular rule. It was quite evident that no one had. The night was pitch black. There was no moon, as Stratham had foreseen, and the stars were obscured by heavy clouds. It was just beginning to snow. Pleased, Stratham made of this another omen of good fortune. The fresh snow would blot out all tracks. He began to be convinced that Providence willed it that McNeill should die.

Now he went stealthily to the basement window whose catch he had unlocked earlier in the evening, and gently pushed it open. He gave a quick look behind him to see that no casual passerby was near, and then climbed in and pulled the window down again. For a moment he stood absolutely still, listening. Not a sound could be heard. He reached into his pocket and took out his monkey wrench. He had heard of criminals being traced by photographed finger prints and so he took the precaution to wear gloves all through these operations.

Groping with one hand before him, he reached the front wall of the hall in which he stood. He felt for a moment until he came to the gas meter which he had noticed every time he had ever gone down to Wesley McNeill's billiard room. There it had stood month after month, a silent invitation to do a murder that could not be found out.

Stratham set his wrench on the main cock. It was not quite wide enough in the jaws. He made the slight adjustment necessary and the wrench fitted perfectly. Stratham then turned the main cock, shutting off the gas from the whole house. After perhaps ten seconds he turned it on again. Any gas jet in the house that had been lighted was now out, but still open and pouring a steady stream of gas into the room. But Stratham felt sure that only one jet in the whole house had been lighted—the one in Wesley McNeill's room.

He put his wrench in his pocket, raised the window, climbed out, closed it again, and went around to the other side of the house. The light no longer shone in McNeill's room. He gathered up the sections of his jointed pole and walked to his home by unfrequented streets. He met nobody. Once in his room, he got out his saw and cut off the threaded brass tips from his rods. There were seventy-two of them and made a

package as large as two fists, including in it the rubber crutch tip.

Locking up the sticks that remained and also the saw, he again fared forth. He got a night car on Indiana Avenue, rode to Randolph and Wabash, walked to State Street Bridge, dropped his package and wrench into the river, and returned home by the same route.

He took the penciled memorandum of the things he must do, which he had made in his office, touched a match to it, tossed it into the grate and watched until it was completely consumed.

IV



THEN he went to bed. For a few moments he lay, thinking, wondering why he felt no fright, no apprehension. Then he cynically thought to himself:

"This crazy idea about a conscience is all off. People get scared because they're afraid of being found out. I'm not frightened for the simple reason that I'm absolutely certain there's no possible chance of my being found out."

Then he turned over and went to sleep, totally oblivious of the fact that there had been one serious flaw in his plan, one flaw that might easily prove fatal. He had not considered the possibility of his footprints betraying him. It was odd that he should have overlooked this possibility in the face of the fact that footprints seem to be the staple stock in trade of the average detective, in story books, at least. But it had never even occurred to him.

Yet this one omission was not destined to have any fatal consequence, for outside the snow fell for hours, as if Providence was determined to repair the one flaw in the plan of the man who had murdered Wesley McNeill.

Stratham woke early and went down to the furnace and put in it his bundle of sticks, the remains of his jointed pole. He also returned the saw to its place. He had now completely obliterated every trace of what he had done.

On the way up he stopped at the house-keeper's room and asked her where the man was who looked after the furnace. She replied that he never arrived until seven. Stratham complained that this was too late and that he should come earlier on cold

mornings. Then he went to his room and slowly dressed. By half-past seven he was down in the dining-room, reading the paper and waiting for his grapefruit, eggs, toast and coffee.

In the newspaper there was nothing of what he sought, and he began to fear that something had gone wrong with his plan. But just then he heard a newsboy calling an extra, and he went to the front door and bought one. It announced the suicide of Wesley McNeill and stated that it was supposed he foresaw the collapse of his corn corner and didn't wish to live to see its actuality. The article was brief and showed hurry in its make-up. Evidently nothing had been discovered until well along toward morning.

He ate his breakfast and started for his office. On the way downtown he had something of a battle with himself as to whether or not he ought to go to McNeill's house. His original plan had been to do so. Now, however, he found himself thinking that to do so would almost be overacting his part.

True, he and McNeill had never been close friends. But they had been intimate business acquaintances, and very few people knew that they had been on opposite sides of the market. To the few who knew the real state of affairs his going would appear peculiar. To the many who did not know the secrets of La Salle Street his remaining away would seem odd. He finally got up, jumped off the car and beckoned to a passing taxicab. In another ten minutes he was ascending the steps of McNeill's house.



YOUNG Andrew McNeill met him at the door. There were several policemen and a number of people about. Some of these Stratham knew. To young McNeill he offered his sympathy and his services, and with the others he exchanged expressions of astonishment.

Young McNeill left them for a moment and returned with Police Captain Farley of the precinct in which they were. He introduced Captain Farley to Stratham.

"The Captain would like to speak to you a moment on account of your having been the last person in the house before uncle went to bed," he explained.

"Yes," said Stratham, quite readily. "That's why I came right over."

They went into the front room and took chairs near the window.

"How'd McNeill seem last night?" was Captain Farley's first question.

"Absolutely natural, normal, and in good spirits."

"That's what his nephew and every one says. Do you think this corner he was running was sure to go to pieces?"

Stratham considered a moment how he should answer this question.

"Well, no one but McNeill himself knew just what his resources were. And whether or not the corner would hold depended entirely on his resources."

"It's funny," said Farley. "I can't think the old man did it himself. I've seen plenty of suicides. This ain't like any of 'em."

"Then, of course, you think he was murdered?"

"I do and I don't. But if he was murdered, it was done in cold blood and planned to make it look like suicide."

"Yes, that seems quite evident."

"And if that's the case, we'll get the guy."

"Let us hope so," said Stratham, with just the proper warmth. "But lots of 'em do escape, don't they?"

"Not one out of a hundred."

"But the statistics, my dear man—surely you can't go back of them."

"What do they show?"

"That there were two hundred and ten murders in the city of Chicago last year and only seven executions."

"Yes, but I'm talking about this kind of a murder—if it was one."

"How is this different from any of the others?"

"Planned; deliberate."

"Yes."

"Most murders ain't really murders; just killings. People get into fights and shoot or knife each other, or hit each other with bricks or bottles. And most of 'em skip out and escape. Some of 'em get caught and go to jail for a year or so. But somehow it seems that every time a guy sets down and carefully plans a murder, he makes a slip somewhere and gives himself away. He sort of overacts his part."

"Ha, that's a good theory," laughed Stratham. "Does it fit the facts?"

"It sure does. That's why I believe it. There's sure something about deliberate murder that always brings it out."

"But if he's had no accomplice, if he's left no trail, if absolutely nobody else knows——" urged Stratham.

"Yes, but he knows," said Farley.

Stratham began to feel nervous and apprehensive. Captain Farley's remarks about overacting particularly worried him. He remembered it was fear of overacting his part which caused him at first to want to go directly downtown. His own theory about remorse was now working out. He felt remorse or apprehension, or fear, or whatever it was, because he now saw a possibility of his being found out.

Stratham felt that he should ask for all particulars and did so. He learned that as yet they had not examined the basement, having found the door leading to it locked and bolted. Of course, there were no evidences of any one having broken into the upper part of the house.

Young McNeill came over to them. Farley continued their talk, though now Stratham wanted to stop. He found himself getting confused. Several times he had halted a wrong answer or question on the tip of his tongue. He was like a man familiar with two languages trying to talk in one and think in the other. The false and the true continually kept getting in each other's way. And all the time that he was talking the thought kept recurring—

"Am I overacting my part?" And he had no test by which to determine whether or not he was.

Finally Captain Farley turned to young McNeill.

"What was the last thing your Uncle said to you before he went to bed?" he asked.

"He asked me if I'd turned the gas out in the billiard room. We'd been playing, you know."

"What did you say?"

"I said that I had, and I've been sore at myself ever since."

"Why?"

"Why, because Uncle Wesley had always been mighty good to me, even if he was queer about wasting gas, and it was a cheap trick to lie to him."

"Oh, then you hadn't turned it out?"

"Not entirely. I thought I might go down again, and I left just a pin point burning on each of the four tips."

"Why, then it's escaping yet," said Stratham easily.

V



FOR the merest instant there was absolute silence. Stratham did not realize at first that he had said anything out of the way, any more than a native Englishman, carrying on a conversation in French, realizes that an English word has inadvertently slipped in. He had made himself too easy. When Young McNeill said that he had left the gas burning in the billiard room, Stratham's first thought was that it was still escaping there, and he uttered that thought as naturally as he had all his life been accustomed to utter his thoughts.

"Why, then it's escaping yet," he said, and in an instant realized what a fearful break he had made. Captain Farley and Young McNeill seemed for an instant to be set rigid, like men instantaneously petrified. Then a wave of color that all his will power could not fight back swept over Stratham's face and neck and lost itself under his collar. The muscles of his throat tightened. The palms of his hands became moist with perspiration.

Fifteen seconds and it was over. He got control of himself, and Farley and McNeill came out of their momentary rigidity.

"I don't quite understand," said Captain Farley. "What do you mean by saying that then it's escaping yet?"

"I meant to say that then it's burning yet."

Stratham said it easily, naturally, quite in an offhand way, but all his ease, all his naturalness, all his offhand manner could not make Captain Farley or young McNeill forget that telltale wave of color that had swept across his face like a colored calcium thrown suddenly upon a stage picture. Then he added casually, "I suppose the idea of it's escaping came from the thought of the escaping gas in friend McNeill's room."

Captain Farley nodded.

"Yes, quite natural," he commented.

Stratham rose.

"I must be getting to the office," he said, "unless there's some way in which I can be of service."

"No, nothing else right now, I guess," said Farley. "Of course, we'll want you for a witness at the inquest."

"Gladly. When is it to be held?"

"Four o'clock this afternoon."

"Here?" asked Stratham nonchalantly.

"Yes."

"That'll suit me perfectly. I'll be on hand."

Stratham was at the door by this time. "And in the meantime," he added, "if you want me a 'phone call will get me at my office."

"All right," Farley replied, and Stratham went out.

As soon as the door had closed, Farley turned to a plain-clothes man who had been waiting in the hall.

"Gibbons, see that man who just went out?"

"Yes."

"Know him?"

"Isn't it Coulter Stratham, the big grain man?"

"Good; glad you know him. Don't let him out of your sight for ten seconds, but don't let him know you're on him."

"I get you."

The man nodded and went out. Farley turned to Andrew McNeill.

"Let's go downstairs," he said. "Don't let any reporters in," he told the uniformed policeman at the front door.

Then he unbolted and unlocked the door at the head of the basement stairs, and went down followed by McNeill.

And Stratham, as he walked to the elevated station, and as he rode to the city, could see Farley and just what he was doing. He could see him sniff the gas-laden air as he opened the basement door. He could see him turn to young McNeill and tell him not to light a match. He could see him grope his way down the dark stairs and into the billiard room, and he could see him throw all the windows open, and then turn to the four jets that stretched over the table and examine each one before he turned it off.

Beyond that, Stratham could not see clearly. His fury at himself blinded his vision. He felt as if he could tear out his tongue for the slip it had made. He didn't realize that it was his mind, not his tongue, that had slipped.



AT HIS office all was excitement. He gave orders to his brokers for the opening, assured absolutely that McNeill's corner would collapse within five minutes after the gong sounded. For half an hour he was so busy that he forgot all about Captain Farley.

Then, perhaps two minutes before the opening of the Board, during the quiet before the cataclysm, Farley and young McNeill walked in. The former's manner was just as open and apparently free from suspicion as it had been at the house.

"Can we have a couple of minutes more, Mr. Stratham?" he asked.

"Why, certainly. The Board is opening, but that doesn't matter. I wasn't going to appear personally in the Pit."

"No, of course not. Young Mr. McNeill told me that you never did."

"So they've been talking about me," thought Stratham.

"We've discovered that McNeill didn't commit suicide."

"Good. I'm glad to hear that. I'd have found it hard to believe that he did."

"Here's how he was killed. Some one, either in the house or out of it, turned the gas off at the meter and then turned it on again. That put out Mr. McNeill's light and then filled his room with gas."

"Tremendously ingenious," said Stratham. "What makes you sure that was done?"

"The four lights that young Mr. McNeill left burning just a pin point were all out, just as you said they'd be. That started us to thinking. How did it happen they were all out?"

"Blew out, perhaps," suggested Stratham.

"No, they couldn't have blown out. There was no window open. So then we saw that the only thing that could account for them being out and yet turned on was that some one had closed and then opened the main gas cock at the meter."

Stratham nodded, but said nothing. He was putting a tremendous hold on himself to keep from shouting out that he had done it. His heart was pounding so that he

thought it certain that it could be seen. Farley went on: "Well, the main cock was turned last night. There were fresh marks of a wrench on it and finger marks in the dust on the meter all around it."

"Then you'll surely get your man," broke in Stratham. "The finger prints will give him away."

"Only he had gloves on," said Farley.

"Oh, that makes it difficult."

"Much more," went on the Captain. "Mr. Stratham, would a close investigation show that you would benefit by Mr. McNeill's death?"

"Why, what do you mean?"

Stratham indignantly jumped to his feet.

"Will it benefit him very much?" asked Farley, turning to young McNeill.

"It will, very much," McNeill replied.

"That's a lie!" Stratham yelled, beside himself. "There's the man who did it!" And he shook his finger at McNeill. "There's the man who will benefit most by his uncle's death!"

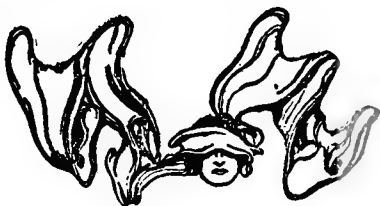
Farley pushed Stratham back into his chair, and as he did so he snapped a pair of handcuffs on the other's wrists.

"Stratham," he said, "no man on earth could have said what you said about the gas escaping in the billiard room unless he knew what had been done. I've put it up to the Inspector and we're going to take a chance on arresting you——"

But Stratham had collapsed in his chair.

"Oh, I did it! I did it!" he exclaimed.

They worked on him for perhaps an hour and brought him into a sort of torpid consciousness. Then they helped him down to a waiting automobile and drove over to Central Station. As they passed through the streets, Stratham heard newsboys calling, "Extree! All about big corn corner busted! Extree!"





ANTING-ANTING

by
Robert J. Pearsall

WITH the exception of Beale, whom Zuder killed, I was Galt's closest friend, and the only man, I think, in whom he confided. Also, I stood guard over Zuder the night he came in from the hills, and he talked a great deal. So I probably know more about the story than any other, excepting Zuder himself, and there is one great reason why he will never tell it.

Until Zuder, driven by the fear of arrest for some petty bit of *bino*-inspired lawlessness (selling a Government shirt, I think it was), deserted from Fort McKinley at Manila and struck north through the jungles, I understand he was only an average good-natured negro trooper. But when he struck Camoranga, not knowing there were troops there, and we gathered him in, he was hard enough. Most of his ammunition was gone, and his eyes were keen and watchful. We surmised a great deal concerning his life during those two weeks.

So when Zuder begged Beale, who was working him on the incinerator some two hundred yards from the guard house, for a chew of tobacco, it was very careless of Beale to comply. Beale lived long enough

to tell us about it. Zuder got him while he was reaching for the tobacco; broke his skull in with a hammer which he'd been hiding behind his back. Then he stripped Beale of his revolver and ammunition and disappeared. He had learned the native art of leaving no trail.

Galt and Beale had enlisted together, from the same Southern village, and I think Galt held some kind of commission from Beale's parents to look out for him. Galt was an older man than Beale, and besides was one of those men in whom you instinctively place confidence. He was tall and bony, hadn't much to say, and his face was too full of angles to be handsome. But he had steady gray eyes of the kind that you like to look into, if you have nothing to hide. His forefathers for generations had been slaveholders. Perhaps that accounts in a measure for his knowledge of African psychology—but that's to come later.

Anting-anting, a term used by the Ilocanos Igorrotes (among whom Zuder probably fell) to indicate the supernatural. It is also the name of smooth, elliptical stones which they carry as charms.

I happened to be on post in the sick bay, so I saw the way of Beale's shuffling off. He was conscious pretty near to the end. There wasn't a particle of fear in him. Just two things seemed to trouble him; one was that he'd been derelict in his duty in allowing Zuder to escape, and the other was the thought of Zuder's treachery. He took that pretty hard.

"And I thought he was starving for tobacco," he kept repeating. "And then he clouted me. He never gave me a chance, Galt."

He had asked for Galt the first thing. Galt stood by him, holding his hand. The muscles of his face stood out. . . . Toward the last he bent over and whispered something in Beale's ear. It was a promise of vengeance, I learned later. Beale smiled and slipped away quite easily.



ZUDER himself had no definite idea of his wanderings during the next few days. From his description I know it was at Molukui that he renewed his supply of cigarettes, raiding a native shop for them. Cigarettes and water seemed to be the only necessities of life with which he must concern himself. Food was overplentiful, and shelter an inessential. And by this time he had learned the business of scouting, so it was but seldom that he encountered a native. When he did—well, he was a crack shot, and his revolver carried farther than a bolo throw.

His general course was north. When, unexpectedly (for he had no knowledge of the country) he reached the coast, he stole a *banca* and continued his flight by water. Fear drove him; the fear of the white man's law that he had thrice outraged. For a couple of days he felt safer on the water. Then an unreasoning premonition seized him, and he landed, well up on the western coast of Luzon.

It would be hard to imagine a wilder country than that. In some thousands of years Nature may tame it into a place suggestive, at least, of human habitancy. Now, however, with its ruinous peaks flooded with burned-out lava, its giant rocks heaped convulsively into jagged pyramids, its dizzy precipices and crazily intricate caves and crevices and pockets, with a sprinkling of sodden ash over all, and only here and there a stunted shrub or

patch of grass, it looks altogether like a worn-out off-throw from some great inferno.

It is not to be wondered that Zuder, landing, shuddered at the desolation of the place. But, as before, the fear of what was ahead of him was overcome by the fear of the thing he had left behind. He started to drag his *banca* up on the beach, then changed his mind. Seizing the side of it, near the gunwale, he heaved it over, and drove a great, sharp-pointed rock against the body of the boat until it broke through. Then he righted it again, weighted it down with rocks, ran it into the water, and sent it, with a mighty shove, fully a hundred feet from the shore, where it circled in the still water and slowly sank.

He watched it as it finally lurched forward and disappeared, and then, for the first time since the beginning of his flight, he felt safe. His two days on the water had eliminated altogether the danger of pursuit. Now he had only to live in the jungle for a while, until the noise of his crime had blown over; then, south to Manila again, and a berth on an outgoing tramp. He was unimaginative, and did not doubt his ability to accomplish these things.

But he was terribly hungry. When he had launched the *banca* he had taken with him a scant supply of bananas, and these and a few fish had been his sole diet since. He turned and searched the forbidding skyline for signs of a fertile valley. Finding none, he shook off his irresolution and started directly inland, through a country in which (but he did not know this) no other man of African blood had ever set his foot.

It was hard hiking. There were no paths nor trails, save those burned centuries ago by little rivulets of lava. Still, despite the absence of signs, he knew he was in the country of the Igorrotes, and he walked cautiously, with every sense alert. He had heard a great deal of their hard-bitten warriors, and regions like this were their natural hiding-places.

But hours passed, and he encountered no one and nothing; nothing but the great waste of hills. Looking back he discovered that he could no longer see the ocean; he had passed without realizing it over the first range. But ahead of him rose others, without end. It frightened him. He was growing weak with hunger. He tried chewing spears of grass, but found them dry and dead. The leaves of shrubs, shriveled by the

heat and ill nourished by the scanty deposits of ground-rock, were no better. Besides, he wanted meat—meat! He was ravenous for it, like a tiger that has been starved on grael.



DISCOURAGED, he was meditating on the advisability of turning again toward the sea when, rounding a great boulder, he came flush up against the side of a small *nipa* shack, built under the shelter of an overhanging ledge.

The sight was very welcome, but he did not forget the need of caution. He drew back silently, pressing against the edge of the boulder, his ears straining for the *whir-r-r* of a poisoned arrow. When he had gotten well around the corner he stopped and, with only his black head showing, studied the shack for some minutes.

Presently he saw a lizard scuttle over the dead grass to the doorway, oscillate for a moment in irresolution, and then disappear within. That satisfied him. His mouth watering with the prospect of food, he stepped out of his shelter and advanced to the door.

But as he stepped inside his hopes faded, for the squalid one room gave absolutely no sign of human occupancy. True, there were skulls grinning from the walls—Zuder's face muddled a little at that—and a cross horribly formed of human bones decorated one end of the room. At the other end there was a narrow grass screen, past the edge of which Zuder got a glimpse of something that looked like the partial outline of a rude, black image.

He growled, animal-like, at his disappointment. To console himself, and perhaps to steady his nerves, he lit a *londre* cigarette. The burning match he threw carelessly on the floor, where it went on burning. Then he stepped behind the screen. He had a vague idea of the superstitions of the Igorrotes. Perhaps, he thought, they gave their gods food offerings. If so—

It was a wooden image, black as Zuder's own body, and about the same size. The resemblance went even further, for the features were not Igorrote, but essentially negroish, the innovation of the local *balian*, whose following had increased threefold with the introduction of the strange god. But Zuder gave it no thought. Food was what he wanted. He had discovered a

crack in the rear of the image that looked like the edge of a secret door and was fumbling with it, when suddenly he became aware of a loud crackling, as of swift flames. At the same instant a rush of smoke and heat swept past the screen, and the little space in which he was confined became like an inferno. His match had fired the building.

He lost his head. With his great strength he could easily have forced his way through the *nipa* wall. But he had the civilized man's habit of door exit, and rushed toward it. The bamboo flooring, dried to tinder, was a mass of flames. They swept upward and licked at his thin clothing. Panic-stricken, he clapped his hands to the burning patches. The next instant he was through the doorway and wholly naked, save for his knee-length drawers and service shoes. He had torn off the rest of his clothing with two wild jerks, and it now lay blazing on the ground. His belt and revolver had been left inside the burning building.

For a moment he stood motionless, stupidly grateful for his escape, for only his hands had been burned, and they slightly. Then the popping of the exploding shells made him realize the extent of the catastrophe. His sole means of self-protection was gone. His spine seemed to crinkle with terror, and his curse was more like a moan.

In that instant he felt Death closing in on him like a net. The next, it leaped at him, for he heard a breaking twig behind him and whirled, and there within fifty feet of him were a party of Igorrote warriors.

Murderer though he was, and bloody-minded renegade as he afterward proved himself to be, Zuder was at least no coward. He shrank backward, but recovered himself instantly. There was no use to run. With their bolos and *kampilans* the natives could cut him into fragments at twice the distance. He drew himself erect and waited.

But in the instant in which he had turned and faced them, and wavered and faced them again, the strangest of all changes had taken place in the attitude of the Igorrotes. It began with a sharp cry from their leader. At that cry the others had halted. A few low-toned, jabbering exclamations passed between them. Then one man threw himself to his knees and bent his head quite to the earth. The next second the rest had followed his example. Zuder looked with astonishment upon the transformation of a

band of warriors into a band of worshipers, worshipping *him!*

He did not understand it then. Indeed, I do not think he ever understood it clearly, although it is plain enough, even from his semi-hysterical account of the occurrence, that they took him for the incarnation of the image which he had destroyed. But he did realize that, in some way, the mantle of authority had fallen upon him. He stepped forward, raised the leader of the band to his feet and, more by gestures than words, for at that time he understood nothing but the Tagalog dialect, commanded the others to rise and to lead him to their village. Thus began his rule over them, a rule which was to carry him to such depths of devilry as few men have ever attained.



IT WAS, of course, months before we at Camoranga learned these things. But it was only a few weeks before we became aware of their result, a fresh revolt in northern Luzon, one that gathered force and spread like a spring freshet.

At first the origin of the trouble was a mystery. Later came reports of a black god, a man born of flames, to follow whom meant victory in this world and Paradise in the next. Then we knew there was much trouble ahead. The Igorrotes are, I think, the most credulous people in the world, but their faith had formerly been pinned on inert images and curiously shaped rocks and stones. Transferred to a living man, or, to judge by the first-fruits of his leadership, a living fiend, it was hard to tell to what lengths it would carry them.

It was carrying them far enough already. Villages that had taken the pledge of friendship to the Americans were massacred outright. Attacks were made on the outlying American posts, attacks so ferocious and wilfully conducted that they were more often successful than not. With each success more of our erstwhile friends among the natives deserted to the new cause. It seemed that the freshly imported word *amigo* was about to be eliminated from the Igorrote dialect.

It is probable that Galt surmised the truth early. Brooding for hours, as he did, over his promise to Beale and the impossibility of its fulfilment, it is likely that when he first heard the mystery of the black deity in the jungles, he linked to it instinctively

the mystery of Zuder's whereabouts, and found they explained each other.

Anyway, shortly after the reports began to come in, I noticed a change in Galt. His moodiness changed to thoughtfulness; he seemed to be trying to solve a problem. Creases came in his forehead. Several times I saw him perched on a rocky hill to the north of the camp, staring away into the jungles. He'd sit that way for hours.

Then one night he deserted. His revolver, haversack, and canteen went with him, and there was a report of some sort of theft from the sick bay, exactly what I couldn't find out. The Colonel made no search for his trail, but I did. I followed it a little way; it led straight north.



THERE seems a great gap between Zuder the negro, flying blindly from the justice of the white men, and Zuder the fiend, flaunting his power in their faces, and emptying over the land which they were supposed to protect the forbidden chambers of hell. Still it was a gap over which he apparently passed quite naturally.

He had always hated the iron discipline of the Army, and this hatred had gradually extended itself to the Army itself. Also he had sympathized with the natives, even while he shot them down. They were, after all, sprung from his own blood-root. So it came quite natural to him to fight their battles. The matter of leadership was an inessential, although, even had it not been thrust upon him at first, his strength and size and cunning would probably have won it for him in the end.

But he loved power, and his vanity was great and easily stimulated. Otherwise he could never have taken the homage of the natives seriously. As it was, it is hardly to be supposed that he did take it seriously at first. But he accepted it, and the acceptance grew upon him as a habit.

The hallucination did not take firm hold upon him, however, until the day of his first encounter with the American troops. That was two weeks after his power had come to him. The country was already running red with blood shed in his name, and he knew it, but it was the blood of natives. He had still to measure strength with the white man, and he feared the test.

Two companies had been sent against him, a strong force for men armed only with

native weapons to engage. He knew the moment as a crucial one. Should they succeed in marching through the country, even without fighting a pitched battle, his prestige would wane. It was up to him to destroy them. He did.

He had the advantage that always lies with the traitor; he knew the habits of his enemies, their ways of fighting, their strengths and weaknesses. He led them on cunningly; and this same cunning, having lain dormant in him all his life, seemed now, to his sick mind, something miraculous. There was an inexperienced officer in charge, and they walked blindly as steers to their slaughter. Zuder stood by and watched them болоed and butchered—it was the massacre of Baibayalin—and when he realized that it was his hand and brain that had done them to death, it is not to be wondered that he went mad. From that day he saw himself through his followers' eyes, and called himself a god.



THERE is every reason to believe that he was entirely sincere in this belief. For example, when he was challenged by a neighboring chieftain to prove his supernatural powers, the Igorrote legends have it that he ordered one of his followers to shoot at him with a captured Army rifle at twenty paces. Whether the native was a poor shot, or whether he pulled the bullet or deliberately shot wild, is hard to say; but at any rate Zuder stood the test and his renown increased.

Again when one of his followers, wild with *bino*, threatened him with a *kampilan* the point of which had been dipped in *bashlai*, Zuder walked in on him and broke his back with his bare hands, receiving the thrust of the spear in his breast as he advanced. It may have been that the poison had lost its virtue, or that Zuder's blood was proof against it, but at any rate, although the wound festered, Zuder was not even made unwell.

Indeed, one is inclined to envy that month of Zuder's life. What wild dreams he must have had; there could have been no limit to them! Himself confident of his omnipotence, and cast in an environment that vibrated constantly with that same idea, seeing all things move according to his desires and adjust themselves to his intentions, is there room for doubt that the sense of proportion was lost entirely in this poor negro's head

and that he fancied the whole world lying just around the corner of time, ready for his enjoyment?

Still, he must have been very lonely. He could have no intimates, for intimacy would be an acknowledgment of equality and that, of course, was unthinkable. So he was a melancholy figure, too, with all men at his feet and yet without power to call a single friend to his side. It is probable that that loneliness grew on him and softened his brain, until finally it had prepared it for the maggot Fear.

For he began to be afraid. Just what he was afraid of he could not say. It was no earthly thing nor, indeed, any unearthly thing; it was just—*fear*! A part of his own mind I suppose, parented by the shrieks of his victims and the rivulets of red blood he had shed. And yet if any one had told Zuder of the workings of the law of compensation he would have laughed.

The increase of this fear only increased his ferocity. Fear is doubt, and each day, by sheer deviltry of conduct, he strove to convince himself anew of his power. Aping all the old cruelties and treacheries of the Igorrotes, he drove his mind deep into the pits of infernal imaginings to invent new ones, so that even the monkey-brained natives began to shake their heads and doubt whether a god or a devil had stepped out of the temple flames.



IT WAS about that time that the Sign appeared.

Word of it was first brought by a warrior who had himself been a priest, but whose following had left him with the coming of Zuder. He had deserted his company thirty miles to the south. His story was very incoherent: a mighty Thing, with a stride a hundred yards long and hot, like a burning mountain, so it shriveled everything as it passed. He himself had seen it, and he had fled straight to warn his master, for without doubt it was a greater god. Wo, wo to the day of living *anting-antings*! (This in an undertone.) When gods strove for the possession of the earth, what would become of men?

Zuder managed to hold his voice to sternness, although he was quaking inwardly.

"You were full of *tuba*," he said. "Go back. Because you came to warn me I will not harm you; but if you tell this story to others I will show you that I, too, can burn

like a mountain. There is no other *antling-antling*."

The ex-priest started back, but half way he met the remainder of the band, fleeing to the doubtful security of the mountains. They had seen, too, and they brought proof with them. One of their number, walking blindly, had set his foot in the midst of that other footprint, and the flesh had been cooked to the bone and had peeled off in long strips, like boiled meat.

If this had occurred three weeks before, Zuder would have taken fresh men and put himself at their head and set off confidently to trail down the mystery and destroy it. But now he paltered. He contrived to have the injured man killed. The rest he sent on a crazy expedition far to the north. But before they went their story had spread, and he saw its effect in the faces of his immediate followers.

Shortly before, driven by the white-livered demon that had possessed him, it appears that he had withdrawn himself from the field and established headquarters on top of an almost unclimbable peak. Skirted on three sides by a deep cañon, on the fourth a winding, precipitous trail led to the summit. Fifty men with no other weapons than rocks and stones could have held it against an ascending regiment. From this refuge he intended to direct the general campaign, using native runners. In the more important engagements, however, he had promised himself he would still lead in person.

He had about three thousand men now, and practically the whole region was under his control. Camoranga still held out, but he had already issued orders that would bring the greater part of his scattered force together about fifty miles to the north. Then he would lead them against the garrison in which he had once been a prisoner. Defeat would be impossible. It had given him the devil's own pleasure to contemplate his revenge.

There was no reason now why he should change his plans. Indeed, he could not change them. But the edge of his anticipations was blunted. Something was stirring in the south. Stragglers came in with stories, always the same, of a demon that left flaming footprints. It was drawing nearer, circling, as if searching for something—or some one. Why, he felt his followers asking, did he not go out and meet it? Furtively,

but constantly, he watched the southern hills. His senses may have played him tricks. Once he saw a sudden puff of smoke, and immediately above it a great shape. Twice he heard a voice calling to him. Each night the black dogs of nameless fear harassed his soul and pressed eager breasts against the weakening bulwarks of his mind.

The most contagious thing under the heavens is the fear of a man who has once been fearless. Zuder, with his black skin sagging into unexpected wrinkles, his weakly bullying voice, his drooping mouth, his nervously flickering eyes, was a vivid translation to his followers of the unknown terrors that lay beyond the hills. They fled from it, as was to be expected. Each night the desertions increased. One morning he woke to find the last of them gone.



HE LASTED two days more. It may have been hunger that stirred him then, and again it may be that he was fascinated by the unknown, drawn in spite of himself toward the shadowy something that had ruined him. At any rate, at last he clambered down and, after two false starts to the north, turned in exactly the opposite direction, and marched straight in the direction of the peril. Still his motive is uncertain, for in that direction lay the nearest chance of food.

He walked like a man who is very ill, stumbling often, shambling through the black gorges, losing himself in myriad passaged pockets. His head hung low, and at times he groaned and again cursed brokenly, with long pauses between. When he cursed he seemed to be trying to work up his courage. But always there was the fear in his eye. Always just around the corner of time there seemed to lurk a dreadful shape. Really there was reason for his fear, but his peril was behind and not ahead of him, within easy pistol range, and its shape was the shape of a white man.

He came upon the footprint about noon. It was half as large as his own body, cloven, like the foot of a satyr fifty times magnified, and it was burned into the solid rock, with little splashes of molten stuff spewed up from the edges. Two hundred feet away, showing gray against the brown rock, was another.

Zuder regarded it for a moment, paralyzed, with fear closing his throat and deadening his heart. Then very slowly

he got back his volition. He turned to the right and started away, staggering. Presently he began to run. His head was constantly turning, and his eyes shifting from left to right. He was muttering to himself, in a scared, silly monotone.

Two days later he reached Camoranga, a frightened black mask of a man, pleading for a hiding-place. Close behind him came Galt. Both were locked up. The charges against Galt, as entered in the sergeant of

the guard's report, were desertion and theft, "in that he did feloniously enter the quarters of the hospital steward and abstract therefrom and appropriate to his own use *three quarts of sulfuric acid.*"

It looked as if it would go hard with him. But the next morning, after the Commanding Officer had pieced together Zuder's rambling story, the red tape of the Service was made to stretch like rubber, and Galt came back to his tent.

FOR BRAVERY

by
**Arthur
Somers
Roche**



THERE was a subtle atmosphere of expectancy in the Precinct Station. As by common, though unspoken, agreement, the men avoided Officer Mullen. They cast embarrassed grins at him, and hurled gruff "g'days" at him, but none drew him aside for whispered gossip, although from several gathered groups came the *buzz-buzz* of whispering that brought a flush to young Mullen's face. Yet it was not the flush of shame; it was the flush of pride.

For Mullen knew that only embarrassment and an unwillingness to discount the measure of praise that undoubtedly awaited him in the next few minutes held his fellow-officers apart. For, after all, there was a possibility that the powers that be might ignore the act which the morning papers screeched from their headlines.

In that case, to offer premature congratulations to the young officer would be to

make him feel embittered. It was better to wait, reasoned the others, and Mullen, decent to the core of him, thanked them in his mind for their waiting. And he tried to keep from his own manner the expectancy of the others. Modest as well as decent was young Mullen. Yet he could not help but know that he had done something deserving of reward, and he wondered what form that reward might take. He clasped and unclasped his hands as he stood with the other patrolmen before the Captain's desk.

Captain Mulcahy looked down upon the line of sturdy policemen, a smile which he vainly endeavored to transform into a sour sneer upon his red, good-humored face.

"A fine-lookin' band of tarriers," he commented. "Sweeney, stand up! Is it the daybootant slouch ye're learnin', for to impress the nursemaids in the Par-rk, what? Davenant, you wid the classy Ar-rchibald handle to ye'er name, are ye tryin' to tear

the buttons off ye'er chest wid the bristle on ye'er chin? Look alive, min! Be the paunch of Bill Devery, ye make me think of a gang of hod carriers, stooped wid the weight they carry! *Stand up!*"

And now the men knew! Captain Mulcahy never slandered his men thus unless he wished to harden his sentimental Irish heart against the emotion engendered by imminent drama—by the bestowing of honors upon one of their fellows. It was always this way: the Captain had abused his men for twenty minutes when Carroll, now of Headquarters, had been promoted. It was as if the Captain feared that his voice would soften into tears unless he hardened his heart in advance.

The men grinned even as they straightened up. On each side of young Mullen elbows nudged him, the friendly nudges of men whose confidence in themselves is such that they begrudge no meed of praise to another.

Mullen's face burned and his throat went dry. Captain Mulcahy stopped berating his men. He droned through a lot of descriptions of men wanted by the police, read a few minor orders, and then cleared his throat impressively. He read:

"GENERAL ORDER NUMBER 1732.

"For bravery. Patrolman Aloysius Mullen is hereby promoted to sergeant. He is granted three days' vacation on full pay, at the end of which time he will report to Headquarters. It is the desire of the Commissioner that this order be read aloud in the precinct of Officer Mullen, and that his fellow officers understand that the Commissioner takes as much pride in the heroic act of Officer Mullen as must his own fellow officers.

"In this time of newspaper censure of the police—some of it, the Commissioner will admit, deserved—a deed like Officer Mullen's tends to show the public that the police force of this city is not composed of crooked men alone. It shows that the great body of the force is as ready now as at any time in the past to risk life in the performance of duty. It shows in spectacular fashion that the police force has not degenerated, that it boasts its heroes as in older days, and the Commissioner is proud to honor the man who has furnished as high an example of devotion to duty, of unswerving courage in the face of danger, as was ever furnished by soldier in battle. Officer Mullen's vacation is to begin with the reading of this order.

"(Signed) JOSEPH HALDANE, COMMISSIONER."

On the right of Mullen was Sweeney and on his left was Davenant. Each grabbed a hand of the young officer. Behind him Mason pounded his back and in front Daly thumped him with friendly violence in the stomach.

"Good lad! Sergeant! The boy that put the police on the front page without doin' some graftin' to get there! Good old Mullen. Put 'er there, old scout!"

They pushed him from one to the other; they pounded his body until it was sore, and wrung his hand until his fingers ached. Captain Mulcahy, grinning from his high desk, added to the noise by frequent bellows commanding his men to be silent—bellows to which his subordinates paid not the slightest attention, knowing again that his indignation was assumed merely to veil his own emotion. But finally the demonstration died away. Mullen left the Station House and the men began their duties of the day, save the night shift, who went home for their eight or twelve hours off, as the case might be.



AND among the night shift men was Patrolman Silas Whittridge.

Queer name for a New York policeman! Yes! And likewise a queer character. From the Berkshire Hills he had come to New York twenty-five years ago. Within three weeks he would have rounded out a quarter of a century of service on the police force and would retire to live upon his pension. And he would retire a plain patrolman!

Neither praise nor censure had Whittridge gained in his long service. He was one of those mediocrities who attract no attention to themselves—a faithful officer. In another man the mere performance of duty, with no spectacular actions, would have brought promotion. But, somehow or other, Whittridge had been passed over during the first ten years of his career on the force. After that, new Commissioners, noting that Whittridge had not gained promotion under previous heads of the force, thought that there must be something lacking in the man, and, as he did nothing to draw attention to himself, they too passed him over when promotions were made. Colorless, self-effacing, modestly retiring—that was the story of Silas Whittridge. And in three weeks he would retire—a plain patrolman.

And to-day was the first time that his failure had been bitter to him. During the long years now ending, Whittridge, at each promotion of some fellow, had comforted himself with the assurance that some time his day would come. But that comfort

had now grown cold. Three weeks more! To-day, listening to General Order Number 1732, he had realized how scant was the time remaining to him to win place.

"Twenty-five years!" he said to himself, as he left the Station House. "And never a chance! Nothing big ever happened. Nobody was robbed in my sight or hearing. No one was murdered near my beat. Nothing—"

He wondered again, as he had wondered so many times, what was lacking in his make-up. For he did not have the Yankee push which his birthplace ought to have given him. He seemed to lack something, and though he comforted himself by saying that he had never had a chance to show the stuff inside him, he had begun to wonder whether, after all, he had the stuff. If he had, he'd have found some way to prove it in a quarter of a century. He was a failure.

He had been on duty sixteen hours and was tired, so his eyes were downcast as he rounded the corner from the Station House, and he did not see young Mullen until the latter placed a hand on his shoulder and stopped him.

"Aren't you going to wish me luck, Sile?" asked the young man.

Whittridge colored.

"You know I wish it to you, boy," he said. "I—thought I'd probably see you again, soon, and—I didn't join the others because— Well, I knew you'd know I felt just the same as they do."

"Sure I do," said young Mullen. "But—I wanted to hear you say so. And—I wanted to tell you that—that—it's a shame, Sile, that's what it is! Here you are, old enough to be my father, and—it's wrong, that's what it is! You ought to be a Captain—an Inspector. You've forgotten more about police work than Mulcahy, bless his old heart, ever knew. Yet he's a Captain, and you— It makes me feel rotten, Sile; it really does. By gosh, why didn't you take an Irish name when you joined the force? I'll bet if you had that—"

Whittridge smiled.

"Italians are promoted; Jews succeed; Germans and Swedes rise. No, Mullen, boy, there's been no prejudice against me. It's just that— Well, well, let's talk about yourself. Are you going to ask that little girl, now that you've been promoted, and—"



BUT Mullen was stubborn. He would not be diverted.

"Look here, Sile," he said, "have you ever applied for promotion?"

Whittridge shook his head.

"Then why don't you?" cried Mullen. "You've got a record of faithful service, and—there's more than myself owe something to you. There's Carroll. He's a lieutenant. There's Mathews. He's an Inspector!"

"And I've heard the men talk about what you did for Mathews twelve years ago. How you took him down to the River; how you called out Red Burke from Deeney's saloon and promised Mathews the beating of his life if he didn't cut the comb of Burke then and there, without his uniform or his badge—just to prove that a copper was as good as any thug in the city, any time or place.

"And Mathews got his nerve that day—and when Red killed Wop Tony, Mathews was *there*! And his capture of Burke that night made him a sergeant, and—Sile—Mathews could say something—that would help. You've been plodding along, helping us younger men, letting us get ahead, and—because you never horn in anywhere and *hoffer* how good you are—well, you ain't got ahead.

"There's Mathews; there's Carroll; there's me! Do y' s'pose I'd ever have gone into that burnin' house yesterday if you hadn't drummed it into me that a copper is more than a citizen—he's the State itself in his small part?"

"If you hadn't made it clear to me that what an ordinary man can pass up without blame a copper's *got* to do? If you hadn't made me understand that a copper oughta die performin' his duty and thankin' God he had the chance to die like a man? Sile, it wasn't me saved that woman yesterday, it was *you*—in my body, and—"

The young man's voice broke. Mullen knew that when he joined the force he had the germs of cowardice within his soul, and that the wise, kindly words of Whittridge had driven those germs from him, and made him a man, and—according to the papers and Commissioner Haldane—a hero.

"I'm goin' to tell the Commish about you, Sile," he went on. "I'm goin' to tell him that—"

"Forget it," said Whittridge. "What you say is well enough, but—what the

police force needs is doers, not tellers. I'm a grand little teller, I am, but I ain't ever been a doer, and—run along, boy, and see the little girl. And remember, when it comes time to givin' her away— She's an orphan, ain't she? Yes? Well, then, I'll be the man to give her to you. Understand?"

Mullen wrung the older man's hand.

"You bet you will, Sile, and—I'll have a talk with Mathews and Carroll yet. You watch me."

And Silas Whittridge smiled gently at the departing back of the young man. Then the smile died from his lips and he resumed his heavy walk to his lodging-house. There was sadness in his eyes now. For it was pretty hard to have a young man offer his help, kindly though Mullen had meant it. It was pretty hard to know that after twenty-five years of faithful service the only way in which he could be brought to the notice of the Commissioner was by the kind action of one whom he had befriended.

Sile didn't want that sort of help. He wanted to do something himself, for himself. But it was too late. And philosophy came to his aid. He wasn't the only man who had never gained promotion. If mere faithful performance of tasks entitled one to promotion, the majority of the police would be officers and there would be no rank and file. Still—it was tough to know that all one could do was to fill a rut. And he sighed as he entered his room and composed himself for a nap.



IT WAS bitterly cold at eight that night when he reported for duty at the Station House. And the momentary warmth of the Station but accentuated the cold when, after reporting, he stepped out into it again. Usually Silas welcomed the cold. At least, it never bothered him, for he was usually concerned with some little kindness, some small charity toward some one, that kept his thoughts otherwise engaged than on the temperature.

It was the current statement about the "House" that Whittridge's veins were filled with oil that kept him warm; for when other officers sought the side doors of saloons, or the gratings above bakery cellars, Whittridge continued on his beat, unmindful of the weather. But to-night he shivered a trifle as a gusty blast from the

river twirled the tails of his coat. For to-night he was as embittered as his kindly soul could be. Mullen was so young—twenty-four! And a sergeant! Contrast always makes our own lot harder.

But he smiled with summoned cheerfulness. Mullen was to be a married man, and needed promotion. He, Sile, was a bachelor, and could continue to get along without it. He fastened a loose button on his greatcoat and strode toward the wide, wind-blown reaches of West Street.

He passed deserted warehouses, gloomy with their shuttered windows, their loneliness made more apparent by the solitary gleam of a watchman's light. He passed shabby, rickety tenements, where light-hearted Latins were learning that gold may be picked from America's city streets only by efforts far greater than the sunnier climes of their native lands demanded. He passed the haunts of poverty and the flaring lights from the resorts of the vicious or the submerged. He had not lost, in a quarter of a century, the love of cleanliness that the windy hills breed; he seemed to breathe more deeply as he came out upon West Street.

He paused and swung his arms, beating them across his chest, and stamping his feet upon the sidewalk.

"It's a night o' weather!" he exclaimed.

And indeed it was; the rabbit-warren tenements had spewed no hordes into the streets this night! The city was in the grip of the worst cold spell that Whittridge could remember. Those few individuals whom Whittridge saw were belated clerks hastening to the ferries. There were none coming from the ferries; Jersey was content to stay at home to-night.

It was not yet nine o'clock, yet even the waterfront saloons, usually sending forth a welcome glow to 'longshoremen and sailors, seemed cold and cheerless. Whittridge noticed, as he strode down the street, that no sounds of revelry oozed through their doors. It was a bad night. And then the first flurry of snow sifted down.

The officer turned up his coat collar higher. There were seven hours of tramping his beat before him; after that he'd have four hours in the Station.

"And I'll need them four," he said to himself. "Goshen, but it's cold!"

Slowly, with that measured pace which enables the policeman to walk steadily for

hours without apparent exhaustion, he made his way down the street. Here and there he tried the doors—chandlery shops, dingy groceries, shabby loft buildings. He chuckled to himself as he found himself hoping that one of these doors might be unfastened, hinting at burglarious entry and consequent achievement for himself. But none was. He reached the end of his route on West Street, turned east, wandered in and about among side streets, until at length he came out again at his original starting-place on the river front. Once more he started on his beat—this was before the day of the "fixed post."

But now the snow was not fitful, not a mere flurry. It was snowing savagely, blizzard-like, and the cold had not decreased. Footing was uncertain, vision blurred. Even the powerful arc lights could send their rays but a few feet, and were mere blurs up above. The snow was of the dry, fine-crystal kind, and seeped through collars and inside coats. Long before eleven o'clock had passed, Whittridge felt numbness stealing upon him.

Once he paused and looked longingly at the side door of a barroom. Within he could find shelter and none would know; he knew the moral caliber of the roundsman of to-night. Trust lazy John Burman to find a snug spot somewhere and let the patrolmen alone! Whittridge was safe to "sojer" to-night if he wanted to. All he had to do was pull his box at regular intervals; in the meantime he could be warm and protected from the storm, and without fear of discovery.

But it so happened that Whittridge had never done this in the past. Despite twinges of rheumatism that attacked knees and ankles—rheumatism brought on by years of exposure to inclement weather—Silas stuck to his beat. At one o'clock he came out upon West Street after the third pacing of his tortuous beat. Not a soul was in sight. As a matter of fact, to be visible, a person would have to be within a dozen feet of the officer, for the blizzard—one from which men were to date events—prevented sight. Whittridge, in the lee of a doorway, consulted his watch by the aid of an electric flashlight. It was a trifle after one. He walked half a block and brought up before the door of a saloon, which should have been closed promptly at one. He entered.

"Close this place at once," he commanded, "or I'll have to pull you!"

The bartender indicated the group of men who sat at tables drawn near a roaring stove.

"Use common sense, officer, can't you?" he asked. "I ain't sellin' anythin'; but if you think I'm goin' to turn this gang out in the streets a night like this, pull away and be hanged to you."

Whittridge hesitated. His duty was to apply common sense to the enforcement of the law. It was a breach of law for the saloon to remain open. But it might be murder to send these men, some of them with too much liquor aboard, with overheated veins which would cause them quickly to succumb to the blizzard, out into the storm. A policeman must use discretion, else he would be arresting some one every second.

"Stay open, then," said Whittridge. "But no sellin'—mind that!"

"Why don't you stick around, officer?" asked the bartender. "This is an awful night to be out. Stick around and get warm."

"Thanks. Can't," said the policeman briefly, and left the saloon.

At each saloon he came to he stopped and entered. But in no case did he order the patrons sent out and the place closed. He was taking a certain responsibility on his shoulders in allowing these places to remain open, but he was willing.

"I guess," he said, as he left the last of them, "that I won't get into trouble for it. A man's got to use some latitude in interpretin' the rules and regulations. And I ain't a slave-drivin' murderer. Gee, I'd like to stay in one of 'em myself!"



THE snow was piled in drifts now; it swirled and flurried and drove blindingly into the face. He reached the end of his West Street beat; he turned east again. He found it hard to find his way about, even in this territory, to which he had become accustomed in the many years of his patrolling of it; which he knew as he had known the cowpaths of the Berkshires years and years ago. But his hand was always to the wall, as per regulations, and so he was not lost. At the proper intervals he pulled his box and resumed his blind, staggering way.

He began to wonder if his feet were frozen. Yet he now lacked energy to jump up and

down and pound them into warmth upon the pavement. He lacked strength to beat his arms across his chest. He lost interest in the snow that sifted through cracks where the sides of his coat met. As unconcernedly, as unknowingly, as a man floats down an unknown current, unaware of the rapids ahead, so Whittridge was drifting along the current of death by freezing.

Yet so insidious was the approach of the demon of cold that the officer was not aware that he stood in danger until he reached West Street at about three in the morning, preparatory to his last pacing of his beat. There, upon the corner, unable to see the great wharfs across the street, unable to see the river, unable to do more than guess at the existence of the buildings across the narrow crosstown street, Silas began to understand that he was in danger. He felt a stupor gripping his brain; he felt a languor stealing over his body. He leaned against the wall of a building and his eyes closed. He slipped almost to his knees and the action aroused him.

"Goshen," he said, "I better hang on to myself! First thing I know I'll not know anything, and they'll pick me up looking like a drowned rat."

He summoned every ounce of energy and started down the river front. A saloon door swung open.

"Hey, officer, come in here!" cried a man. Whittridge stopped.

"What's wrong?" he asked.

"Been watchin' for you since your last round," said the bartender. "You better come in here—and stay here! Man just got in—almost dead. You can't last through this storm. Come in—and stay till mornin'."

"Thanks," said Whittridge, "but I gotta trail along."

And he trailed along. Somewhere in the wide street, or in some narrow cross street, huddled beneath the swirling flakes, might be some wanderer of the night. And the duty of the cop is to protect life as well as to protect the law. Whittridge staggered on. The bartender looked after him.

"I never thought," said the latter, "that I'd be tryin' to help a bull, but—I'll bet every other cop in town is snug and warm somewhere. But that guy—why, he won't even take a ball or a beer in hot weather!"

"Close that door," cried some one from the bar's interior. The door closed, shutting out the snow and cold.

How Whittridge reached the end of his route on West Street he could never have told. He was almost blind, his feet were like lumps of ice, he could detect no feeling in nose, cheeks or ears, and his limbs were leaden. Yet, dazed though he was, as he turned for his last lap, the one that would bring him to the comfort of the "House," his dulled ears heard a cry from across West Street. It was a faint cry, and only a momentary lull in the storm carried it to his ears. But he answered it. He plowed through the drifts and reached a wharf. There, in the lee of the building, crowded into a narrow doorway, he came upon a girl.

"Oh, officer," she cried, "thank God you came! I—I'm freezing, and——"

"It's all right, lady," said Silas. "I'll get you home all right. But how'd you come here?"

"From Philadelphia," she answered. "I was visiting there. I got a telegram, and—I started home—on the eight o'clock train. But the storm delayed us and it was one o'clock when I landed at Twenty-third Street, and—I got lost in the storm. There was no car waiting at the ferry——"

"Why didn't you stay in the ferry house? Why didn't you take a cab?" asked Whittridge.

"I—don't know. I didn't think. I thought I could walk. I live on Seventeenth Street near Sixth Avenue, and——"

"And you're a mile or two out of the way, on West Street, near Spring," exclaimed Silas. "You sure got turned around, lady. Just grab my arm and we'll make it to the Station House. You'll be warm there."

But, frozen, frightened though she was, she would not listen to that. She wanted to go home, to be with her mother, and became hysterical in her frightened pleading to be taken there. Silas heard her. There was no hope of getting a taxi or any other conveyance. And the girl said that her mother was sick—dying—and would be needing her.

Dully Silas took stock of himself. Yes, he could make it—if it were a matter of life or death. As for the girl, she had not suffered much; she had been in the shadow of the wharf house for over an hour, and the worst of the storm had not got at her. Also, she was buoyed by the presence of a policeman. She could make it, and together

they started. One hour later he left her at the door of her home.

"I'd have been frozen to death," she said, "if—if it hadn't been for you, and—come in! You must get warm; you'll freeze!"

"I gotta report at the Station," said Silas, "and there's part of my beat to be gone over yet. There might be somebody else, like you, in danger. Thanks, though. I hope your ma is all right."

And he left her, plodding into the night. Thirty minutes later, near the Christopher Street ferry house, he stumbled over a curbstone. And he did not rise again. He slid down into the soft snow with a sigh. He moved his limbs slightly, in purely involuntary protest against his fate. But his tired brain accepted that fate. It was so pleasant lying there; so suddenly warm; and he was so drowsy. The snow sifted down over his body; in a few minutes he was hidden beneath its smothering, warm flakes.

Dawn came; at least the hour which the almanac stated was dawn. And with that hour came a milk team struggling desperately against the storm. Its driver saw the huddle that was Silas. He investigated, and a little later Silas was in the Station House. There they worked over him and summoned an ambulance. In the hospital the doctors shook their heads, but went to work. Little by little the apprehension on their tired faces lifted. Silas was safe, although he must endure torments before he would be well again. He had had as narrow an escape from death by freezing as it is possible for man to have, and yet avoid the trip to the Valley of the Shadow.

 IT WAS three days before the doctors discharged him, limping, weak, and with a heart that was leaden in his bosom. For, just before his discharge, he had been notified by a brother officer that he was suspended from the force, pending the hearing of charges that had been filed against him. And the hearing of the charges was scheduled for that afternoon, at Headquarters. Silas was too dazed, too bewildered, to ask the officer any questions. He merely took the papers handed to him and looked dully at them.

A little later an orderly guided him to the hospital door, and he looked out upon a city whose cleaned streets gave no evidence of the fearful, devastating blizzard of but a few nights gone. Silas stumbled down

the steps, into the arms of young Mullen. The young man hurried him to a taxicab.

"Feelin' well, Sile?" he asked gently.

Whittridge indicated the papers in his hand.

"My Heavens, Mullen boy!" he said. "I'm up on charges! Me! Dereliction of duty, deserting my post, drunk on duty! Mullen boy! Oh, my Heavens! I don't understand; I——"

His voice broke; Mullen gripped his hand with fervor.

"It's a shame, Sile," said the younger man. "It's—raw, that's what it is! But—you wasn't drunk; you didn't do any of them things, did you? Hop into this taxi and let's get downtown."

Whittridge threw off Mullen's hand.

"Go down—and be *tried*!" he growled. "By —, no! I'm through. I'm goin' to mail my resignation to the Commissioner! I'll get off the force, if they want me to. But they won't put me off! They won't shame me by makin' me face trial for things I didn't do. Try me? By —, no!"

Mullen stared at his old friend.

"You ain't quittin', Sile, are you? You ain't runnin' from attack, are you? Come down—and face 'em out! Come down to Headquarters! You're no quitter! You don't resign under charges. You meet 'em! That's you. You ain't been on the level for twenty-five years to lie down like a dog now. You come with me!"

Bitterness welled in the heart of Whittridge. Mullen was right. He couldn't quit under fire. But he'd go down there and he'd talk! Twenty-five years on the force and disgrace at its finish! But he'd have his say! He was no quitter, by —! If truth and honor counted for anything, if decency and being square counted, they'd not railroad him from the force.

And if they did—— Didn't honesty pay at all? Didn't character count? Was it only grafters that got on in the force? If not, why was he thus shamed when he'd only done what he should have done? Was the whole world rotten, after all? Wasn't there any reward for goodness? Where was it, then? He groaned aloud as the taxi sped downtown and Mullen winked back a tear.

"Sile, things has to be *proved*, you know. And they ain't proved yet. You got a record. Stand on it!"

But Whittridge laughed bitterly.

"A record?" he retorted. "What of it? I'm only a patrolman, Mullen. And what's a patrolman to a Commissioner that wants to make a show of how he cleans up the force? Nothing! Nothing, and—— Why, I don't even know who makes these charges; I ain't got a lawyer; I ain't got a defense—except my character; and—they got to give me time. They got to give me time!"

Then bitter wrath possessed him.

"No, they ain't," he cried. "I don't want time! My hands are clean, and if the Commissioner can't see it, why——"

"Now you're talkin' like my old friend Sile," said Mullen. "Here we are. Jump out!"

He gave Silas his arm and they alighted before Police Headquarters. In a couple of minutes they were in the trial room. Whittridge allowed Mullen to lead him to a chair, and then he stared about the room. He saw Mathews; he saw Carroll; and his face turned crimson at the thought that they whom he had helped, younger men both, should be present to see him in his shame.

But he wasn't shamed yet. An honest man didn't get ahead in this world, but he couldn't be pushed back! Not at least until he'd been heard. Silas would fight. He saw a girl smiling at him and wondered where he had seen her before. Then the Trial Commissioner, seated at his raised desk, cleared his throat.

"Silas Whittridge, patrolman; charges, dereliction of duty, drunkenness on duty, desertion of post. All ready?"

Sile leaped to his feet. Mullen dragged him back.

"Wait!" he whispered. "Wait!"

Then, as Whittridge struggled in his grasp, the young man said: "For all your life, Sile, you've helped others. Now—let others help you!"

And before Sile could make answer, a tall, imposing-looking man was on his feet, addressing Trial Commissioner Danton. Whittridge dropped feebly into his seat. The man was Cranston—Cranston, one of the most famous lawyers in the city. And he was smiling at Silas. Dazed, Silas heard the clerk's voice drone, "Witness for the Department: John Beatty."



A SMUG-LOOKING man walked to the witness chair. He gave his name, stated that he was a member of the Anti-Vice Society, and that on the

night of December 17 he had taken refuge from the blizzard in a saloon on West Street. He had been on his way to the ferry, but feared to cross the street. A policeman, whom he recognized as being in this courtroom now, had entered the saloon after one o'clock, and had not closed it. Therefore he, John Beatty, as a law-respecting citizen, had felt it his duty to inform the police commissioner of the fact.

"It was so cold that you didn't dare cross West Street, eh?" queried the famous lawyer.

The witness nodded.

"That's all," said the lawyer.

Trial Commissioner Danton stared at the lawyer.

"No further cross examination?" he asked.

Cranston shook his head. The milkman who had found Whittridge testified. He had found the officer in the snow at Christopher Street, a quarter of a mile outside his beat. He had noticed no signs of intoxication on the frozen policeman. There was no cross examination.

"That all?" asked the lawyer of the Commissioner.

"It is proved that Whittridge was off his beat; that he did not close a saloon open in violation of the law," said Danton. "That is enough to justify his dismissal from the force without proof of intoxication. The intoxication charge was added because it seemed probable that the officer would not have wandered from his beat and succumbed to the storm unless he had been drinking. The defense, if there is one, will now be heard."

The lawyer smiled.

"There is a defense," he said. "James Duffy to the stand!"

Mr. Duffy spoke briefly. He owned the saloon on West Street which, it was complained, Whittridge had not ordered to be closed. Mr. Duffy had no overweening love for cops. He admitted it.

"But this bull, he's got sense—and a heart," said Mr. Duffy. "He used common sense when I told him that I wouldn't close the place. I wouldn't 'a' done it for no one. And that guy Beatty was glad to stay there and get warm. He's one o' these fool reformers that want to get their names in the papers, and——"

"It was for humanity's sake, then, that Officer Whittridge allowed you to keep

open? There was no money passed between you?"

"Say," said Mr. Duffy with emphasis, "I've known this bull for years and he wouldn't graft a beer!"

"That will be all," said the lawyer. "Miss Amy Cranston!"

As he called the name he looked at Whittridge. He did not smile now, and it seemed that from his eyes his heart spoke to the policeman on trial. As for Whittridge, he gasped. He recognized her now; she was the girl of the storm. And when she answered Cranston's questions she said, "Father."

So that was why the famous lawyer was appearing in a police trial! The cockles of Whittridge's heart suddenly warmed; his eyes filled; there was good in the world.

The girl was brief. She told of being lost in the storm; her mother was ill; she had been telegraphed to come from Philadelphia. Her father had not met her at the station, and the cousin who had been sent to meet her by her father had gone to a ferry and missed her. She had begged Officer Whittridge to take her home and not to the Station House. And the officer had done so, at what risk to himself was shown by his later yielding to the storm.

"Lieutenant Carroll!" cried the lawyer, when his daughter stepped down. "Lieutenant, have you known Officer Whittridge long?"

"Fifteen years," was the answer.

"Did you ever see him take a drink?"

"He's a teetotaler."

"You and he are friends?"

"He is the best friend I ever had. When I joined the force I was ignorant. Out of the goodness of his heart, he instructed me. And when I rounded up the Gas House Gang, it was because I followed Officer Whittridge's advice. He showed me how to get the evidence that resulted in their conviction and my first promotion."

"Why did you not tell your superiors this at the time?"

"Officer Whittridge begged me not to. He said that, after all, I'd done the work and deserved the credit. I took his view—selfishly. I am sorry for it, now."

"And you consider him a good officer?"

"One of the best."

"Then why has he not gained promotion?"

Carroll shrugged his shoulders.

"I guess he's been unlucky," he responded. And he never tried to push himself."

"Inspector Mathews!" cried the lawyer.



THE reporters who had dropped in, as a matter of routine, were racing pencils across copy paper now. No trial like this had ever been witnessed in the grim confines of Headquarters. And as Mathews took the stand, their heads craned forward. For Mathews was the big man of the Strong Arm Squad. Whatever Mathews did or said was news.

"Inspector Mathews," said Cranston, "why are you an Inspector?"

It was a strange question, and even Commissioner Danton leaned over to hear the reply.

"Because of Silas Whittridge," came the answer.

"Explain."

"I was a plain bull beating the pave," said Mathews. "There was a man named Red Burke—the cock of the river front. He had my goat. I walked on my toes when my beat took me by him. And Whittridge heard of it. He knew what'd come to me if things kept on. He found me one day when I was off duty. Says he:

"Mathews, I'm older than you, but I can fight yet. I hear there's a tough named Red Burke that's got you buffaloed. Do you think he could hurt you more than myself? Mathews, you lick Red Burke to-day. You put the fear of the New York police into him or I'll put you in the hospital myself!"

"Why do you butt in?" I asked.

"'Because I love the force,' he answered, 'and no man shall stay upon it who fears any one within the city limits—or outside. Is it me—or Burke?'"

The Inspector paused and looked around. It was no shame to him to admit a fear long dead. There was none who to-day would doubt the oft-proved courage of Inspector Mathews. Mathews was too big to fear confession. He smiled broadly.

"I looked at Whittridge—and I thought of Burke. I weighed the two of them in my mind. Mr. Commissioner, I chose Burke. I made him know his master. And when later he murdered a man, I did not fear to take him—single-handed. 'Twas then I was first promoted. I am now an Inspector. I am asked why I am an Inspector. There is the answer!"

And his great hairy hand pointed at the blushing Whittridge as he left the stand.

"Sergeant Mullen!" cried the lawyer.

But the Trial Commissioner struck his desk.

"Enough," he said. "It seems to me that this trial has become a plea for the promotion of Officer Whittridge. You are proving, by the words of men I can not doubt, that Whittridge is a good and faithful policeman. I can hear no more of this sort of evidence. I do not understand, Mr. Cranston, why you permitted this case to go to trial without first informing me of the absurdity of the charges against the defendant. These matters are not germane to the trial.

"The question is, did Officer Whittridge desert his post? He did—justifiably. The question is, did he permit a saloon to remain open after hours? He did—justifiably. The question is, was he intoxicated? He was not.

"I am sorry that Mr. Beatty should annoy the Commissioner with such a charge. There are times when even a reformer should be expected to use judgment, common sense. I ought to dismiss these charges at once, but—there has been so much of interest told here to-day that I will not do so. I will submit a report to Commissioner Haldane. For the present, the suspension of Officer Whittridge is lifted and—I would like to shake his hand!"



"WH—WHAT'S the idea, Mullen boy?" asked Whittridge, when they were outside. "Why did you let me be tried? Why——"

"The idea," said burly Mathews, "is that there was only one way to get your case before Haldane. He's too busy a man to listen to your friends boosting you, but what happens at a trial—just wait!"

And then Miss Amy Cranston was led up by her father, and both of them spoke words that brought the red to the face of Whittridge.

"Don't thank me—you've paid me," stammered Whittridge.

Cranston laughed. He pointed at Mullen.

"He's the one to thank," he said. "When I went to your Station House to visit you and thank you for saving my daughter, it was he who told me of the charges against you, and he who suggested this plan of ac-

tion. A clever man, Officer Whittridge."

Mullen laughed sheepishly.

"Aw, I was just payin' my debts," he returned. "Let's come along, Sile, unless you want to talk to the reporters."

"I do *not*," said the badly rattled Whittridge.

And he was still more rattled next morning when, after droning through the day's routine orders, Captain Mulcahy cleared his throat and looked down upon the line-up of policemen.

"Stand straight, ye tarriers," he snarled. "Stand up! Ye look like a gang of paralytics. Stand up!"

"GENERAL ORDER NUMBER 1824.

"For bravery. Officer Silas Whittridge is hereby promoted to be lieutenant. It is the Commissioner's pleasure to announce this promotion in the same order wherein he dismisses the foolish charges against the Officer. And it is the Commissioner's further pleasure to order this promotion, not for a single act, but for over twenty-four years of devotion to duty and of courageously performing that duty.

"Night after night, day after day, Officer Whittridge has done his duty. He has never shirked. He has taught other men to do their duty. He has made good policemen out of indifferent material. He has been instructor, guide and friend to others. His promotion is for his years of devotion to duty, and not only for his heroism during the recent blizzard.

"And the Commissioner wishes to impress upon the police force that men are sometimes passed over for promotion because it is impossible for the Commissioner to be aware of the merits of all. It is not too late for him to reward Officer Whittridge. The Commissioner wishes also to thank the officers who so cheerfully testified to the debts they owed to Lieutenant Whittridge. This order to take effect immediately.

"(Signed) JOSEPH HALDANE, COMMISSIONER."

After the tumult had died away, Captain Mulcahy looked down upon the newly created lieutenant.

"Loot'nant Whittridge, sor," he said impressively, "I congratulate ye. You an' me ar-re gittin' old, and—it's good to know that virtue ain't its only reward."

Silas looked about the room, flushing under the congratulatory grins of his fellows.

"I—I—Yes, Captain," he stammered, "but—there's been times when—a man gets discouraged, and—wonders if he'll ever show the stuff."

Captain Mulcahy blew his nose.

"Nonsinse, Loot'nant!" he said. "You was showin' the stuff all the time. Trouble was, other folks was blind."

The RANGE RIDER



CHAPTER I

GLOOMY BILL CARRIES SOME MAIL

THERE was a thin mist of rain still hanging in the air and the sunbeams glanced through it and flickered on the slimy clay of the sodden road, which began to dry with almost miraculous expedition. The storm was over, for the time being, and the residents of the village began to appear on the single street and go about their various tasks.

The rank grass in the fenced yards and the drooping leaves of the apple trees steamed in the hot light and slowly dried to a dusty green tinge as if the heavens had not so recently opened the flood gates and dumped tons of water on the baking soil of Arizona. The soil drank it up thirstily and gaped for more, but at this moment there was no more for it. The rain had passed on and, for a few hours, Pine and that part of Gila County surrounding it must rest content with the dampness that recalled the cooling tempest. It would rain again tomorrow and the next day and the next; perhaps for two or three weeks longer in all. Then Arizona would return to hopeless aridity until the Winter snows and rains brought further relief.

The ground steamed, the roofs of the dull, unpainted houses steamed, the leaves and grass steamed and the glistening slicker that was worn by the mail carrier steamed more industriously than did these other things.

The mail carrier also steamed, a steady, simmering vapor of gloomy profanity and discontent, in no way brought on by any direct influence of the sun. The mail carrier, Bill McGhie, was a pessimist and saw evil in all things, howsoever good they might appear to the less discerning.

It was Bill's luck, he opined, that just as he was completing his trip, after endless hours of riding in a pouring torrent, of bogging down on treacherous slopes, of stoical suffering in a stuffy slicker, with trickles of water sliding down his back, he should draw unto his home just as the sun came forth and mocked him. Bill allowed that he wouldn't care if the sun never came out so long as he be dryly ensconced before his base-burner stove in his bachelor cabin, if it would only shine softly while he made his official rounds. Once and again, Bill vowed that he would be everlastingly condemned if he didn't resign that night and so end the misery of riding for a Government that thought a dollar was as big as a cart wheel and paid accordingly.

He slopped along through the sticky mud, never casting a glance at the frowning, black wall of the mesa that reared its towering height above him to the right. It was an old story to Bill and such sentiment as was in him was not to be wasted on any such thing as scenery. In his opinion there was entirely too much scenery in Arizona, anyway. What the country needed was a few more white people and less rocks and snakes. Folks that raved about scenery didn't have to climb over it day after day,

carrying a heavy mail sack, or they wouldn't find so much to admire in it.

But there were more fools in the world than sensible folk and Bill had even heard that people would come all the way from God's country, back East, to see the hills and valleys and snakes and Gila monsters and other unpleasant things that were indigenous to Arizona. Bill couldn't understand why, but the fact was admitted. Some people came for their health, and some, like the Forest Ranger on the mountain, came no one knew why. There was some sense in people coming for their health, as Mr. Beran had come, but it was as plain to Bill that even that amount of sense was overborne by the evidence of innate imbecility shown by the aforesaid Beran in his other actions. If Beran had really had any sense he wouldn't have brought his daughter into this hole nor would he have gone and paid good money for a ranch which every one knew did not belong to the man who had sold it to him. Bill uttered a gloomy chuckle as he drew from his saddle pockets a letter which he was bringing from the post-office at Pine and which was addressed to Beran. That would jolt him, thought Bill.

Nearly every one in Pine had had one of them things. Bill knew without looking at it what it was. The official frank of the Land Office told him all he could wish to know. Beran's daughter would realize what a fool her father was as soon as she read that, if she didn't already.

But it might be a comfort to her to know that the ranch they had so rashly bought was no good anyway and might make the loss of it less of a blow to them. So Bill charitably decided to tell her as soon as he had an opportunity. That was Bill all over. He was one of the most charitable of men.

He was coming to that ranch now, and he glanced disparagingly to the right at the straggling fences and the rough, brown land sparsely covered with young, second-growth yellow pine, which offered such a poor prospect for agriculture. The land was there, plenty of it, and water in springs, but the latter could not be used for irrigation and without it the land was as barren as the Sahara.

Bill had a ranch just west of this half a section and one almost of the same character, and so he felt amply competent to judge of its worth. He had always maintained that the barrenness of his property drove

him to eke out a living by hiring out to the Government, but since the Land Office had taken exception to the title by which he held his acres, his feelings had undergone a change. He was still certain that his neighbor's land was worthless, but his own had suddenly become precious and he wailed loudly when there was any to listen, concerning the soullessness of Governments and the incompetence of bureaucrats.

Every one in Pine Village was in the same boat, but that did not arouse Bill's sympathy. They should have had better sense than to settle there in the first place and besides, they were Mormons and as such, Bill did not consider them entitled to sympathy. But as for himself, Bill was convinced that he was the victim of injustice and he made up his mind once more to resign immediately.



HE SLOPPED on up to the sagging gate that opened onto Beran's property. Here he dismounted, and after opening the wires led his horse toward the house, carrying in his hand the letter that he knew meant wo and disaster to the dwellers therein. The door opened as he approached and Helen Beran leaned against the jamb awaiting his approach.

"Have you some mail for us, Mr. McGhie?" she tinkled, smiling on the mail carrier with that mirth that would have set half the men of Pine to fetch and carry for her like slaves if she had permitted it. Bill felt a fresh wave of gloom submerge his soul.

"Which I'm plenty sure it ain't no joyous greetin's I'm a bringin' you, Miss Helen," he grumbled, as he held out the long, official envelope. "Them things has b'en driftin' in hereaways right smart these few weeks back, an' I reckon you-all have done got your turn at it now. It's a heap hard on pore folks that's a tryin' to eke out a livin' in this hole of a country when the blasted Gov'ment comes a squanderin' in an' runs 'em off the Reservation with these here Forest Reserves an' such. What's Arizona a comin' to, I'd like to know, an' likewise where has the freedom which we reads about in the school books done gone to? Which I maintains it's tormint, an' no two ways about it, whatever."

Helen Beran tilted her head a little sideways and smiled again at him.

"Is it as bad as all that, Mr. McGhie?"

she asked. "Well, you just come in and sit down until father gets here and we can have a little to eat and cheer you up. He's out on the hill trying to plant some apple trees and I don't think he knows anything about it. He will be here in a little while and tell us, however, just how it should be done."

"And if there is any bad news in this letter, trust him to discount it. For optimism, as you know, Mr. McGhie, father is a perfect setoff to you. He can see nothing but the lining where you can see nothing but the cloud, and the two of you are necessary to strike a balance."

Bill followed her into the house. It was a small and plain cabin, built of unplanned boards from the portable sawmill on the Reserve, but it had been painted after a fashion and its interior was attractive and neat, with Navajo blankets on the floor and the evidences of taste and refinement on every side.

"How's your pa, Miss Helen?" asked Bill, as he sat down carefully on a chintz-covered chair and deposited his hat on the floor. "He wasn't lookin' so well when I last see him."

"But he's looking better now," said Helen. "He and his orchard are both hopeful and thriving if you can trust him."

"It ain't no country for orchards and it ain't no climate for folks like your pa," remarked Bill. "He may go right along persuadin' hisself that he's agettin' stronger an' better, but the fust thing you all know he'll jest naturally peter out. I seen a many die jest thataway."

"Gracious!" said Helen. "What a cheerful prophet you are! I was sure that he had at last gotten rid of all that afflicts him in the way of ill health and now you come and dash my hopes to the ground. The subject is so painful that we must change it. Let's see what the disastrous letter is about. It is addressed to father but I don't suppose he will care if I open it."

"And you might break the news to him a mite," added Bill.

So Helen slit the letter open and read it while Bill sighed and gloomed. It was as he had guessed and Helen's smile faded as she read it. Briefly, it was a formal notification that the land on which they lived was, by virtue of the President's proclamation, a part of the Black Mesa Forest Reserve and as such not open to settlement. They were, accordingly, trespassers on

Government property and were required to show cause without delay why they should not be ejected therefrom.

"But we bought the ranch and paid for it," said Helen, as she looked up from this harsh epistle.

"Who sold it to you?" asked Bill, though he knew very well.

"It was a man named Nephi Lane," answered Helen. "Father met him in Phoenix, where he was on his way to Mexico with his wife. He told us all about this place and gave us reasons why he was leaving. Poor father, always optimistic, thought it ideal for his ailments and closed the bargain at once, after a lawyer had made a pretense of looking up the title. I was doubtful of it at the time but since he had paid the money and we could not locate the lawyer again and Lane had gone to Mexico, we made the best of it."

"And, of course, when we found after our arrival that Lane had actually lived here and that his father and brother were prominent people in the village, though the land was not exactly as he had represented it to be, I thought it was all right. It cost father a good part of all he had and after we had fixed it up there was not a great deal left. If this is to go now, I do not see what we are to do."

"Them Lanes," said Bill, "are crooked a plenty. But Moroni is so pious that no one will believe it. Nephi was a squatter just like the rest of us and the land hadn't never be'n surveyed so he couldn't give no title to it, none whatever. Nephi goes to Mexico some hurried because he done eloped with old Jim Baker's girl from over near the Verde an' Jim is some peevish thereat an' aims to perforate him a heap along with the girl if she's in range at the time."

"But Nephi don't allow to come up none with Baker an' he tharfore pulls his freight. On his way he falls in with your pa an' takes him into camp like you explains. He ain't got no title to pass on an' so your pa can't get none from him, which is legal an' horse sense what any one can see."

"But what about all the others?" objected Helen. "You say they are squatters, too, and have had these notices. What do they intend to do about it?"

"They can't do nothin'," said Bill. "The Gov'ment's too big for pore ranchers to fight ag'in', an' I reckon we-all will have to pull up stakes and move along. I got a

crop o' potatoes on my place an' I reckon I don't get to harvest them none whatever. All of Pine will have to move and there won't be nothin' left around hereaways except sheep an' trees. It's a dooce of a country, it is."



HELEN went to the window and looked out toward the road, now glistening muddily in the slanting rays of the evening sun. She felt almost as pessimistic as Bill and was inclined to agree with his estimate of the country. She was hardly to be blamed for this, since she had lived her life in cities and amid more comfortable surroundings until her father's health had failed and he had sought a refuge and a cure in Arizona.

Helen was naturally cheerful, but this last blow was almost too much to bear. She had found the rough life of the ranch and the household work hard enough, but she could bear that if they were only assured a roof over their heads and enough to eat. But if they were to be cast out by a pitiless Government with her father unable to resume his work as an accountant, what were they to do? Helen did not know and did not find the puzzle a cheerful one to think about.

A figure on horseback came into her line of sight and she watched it idly, hardly realizing that it was attracting any attention from her. Yet her mind was unconsciously taking note of it, as a vague connection between the riding man and her troubles manifested itself in her thought. That was the Forest Ranger from up on the Mountain, probably coming in on one of his monthly visits to the settlement to buy supplies or have his horses shod.

She recognized him by the fact that a pack horse, utterly unrestrained by rope or lead line, followed him like a dog and that another sort of beast also trailed him, though not like any dog as she knew dogs. Yet it was a dog, as she knew, though its breed was strange to her. She had remarked that dog before and wondered at its characteristics, which were more than peculiar. In happier moments she had harbored curiosity concerning it, but that was past for the time being.

The Ranger drifted past her and on out of sight, leaving a vague impression of a slouching figure that sat easily to the shuffling trot of his horse, with hands crossed

on his saddle horn and eyes bent always on the road just ahead of him. Whenever she had seen him, he had kept that attitude of detachment from his surroundings and he had always ridden at that monotonous trot.

He seemed to typify the cold indifference and mechanical bureaucracy of the Government which he served. The analogy would have been complete if it had not been for the dog. That had no place in the picture. It was a note of mockery in a serious matter.

Helen made up her mind suddenly to a move whose consequences were of the vaguest in her mind. She hardly thought that anything would come of it, but there was a chance that something would, and she intended to try it. She turned back to Bill and bade him make himself comfortable until her father came in while she ran down to the village on an errand. She asked him if she might take his horse and to this Bill readily consented, though he did not like to lend his beast to others. Helen was one whom no one ever dreamed of refusing anything, and Bill would have lent her his head if it had been asked of him.

She threw a shawl over her head and went out to mount the gentle horse with the skill of a cow puncher. Then she waved her hand to Bill and to the approaching figure of her father, and spurred out to the road and turned toward the village, some four miles distant. Fully a mile ahead of her rode the slouching figure of the Forest Ranger, swaying tirelessly to his endless trot.

CHAPTER II

THE RANGER IS REBUKED

HELEN at first gained rapidly on the Ranger, but before she had lessened the distance to half, the impulse with which she had started had begun to die in her and she felt a fresh wave of doubt and discouragement sweep over her. The Ranger was so impersonal, his infrequent appearances were so wrapped in the atmosphere of aloofness and the detachment of officialdom, that her hope of gaining anything by an appeal to him sank lower with every foot of advance. She pulled her horse down to a gait that equaled that of her quarry and ceased to gain upon him, thinking busily of the

encounters she had had with him and endeavoring to recall some memory that would encourage her.

The first time she had seen him was on the day, three months before, when she and her father had driven into Pine in a freighter's wagon and paused before the post-office, which was in the house of one of the Mormon residents of the village. A man dressed in a blue jersey, khaki trousers and high-heeled boots had glanced indifferently at them. His first glance had been followed by a more intense stare, but one quite different from the furtive looks of the other idlers who were gathered on the stoop. His had been keen, appraising, but cool and impersonal.

She had noted his brown, still features and the blue of his eyes beneath the shadow of his Stetson. The thing which had most attracted her attention however, had been the whiteness of his hands and their freedom from roughness. The skin of his face and neck, too, was unwrinkled and smooth, with no trace of the harsh texture caused by the hard life of the ranchmen. The only other feature that she noticed was the fact that he wore a round, nickel-plated badge, whose significance she did not then know.

A few days later he had ridden past the ranch, of which they had taken possession, when she was standing in the doorway. This time he was dressed in the flapping leggings of the cow punchers and he rode his horse at the easy trot which was to become familiar to her as to every one else, while behind him frisked that nameless beast which puzzled her.

His head had been bent on the road before his horse's feet and his hands were resting, cased in buckskin gantlets, on the saddlehorn. He looked like any cowman, with coiled rope and *chaparejos*, but there was a nameless quality of neatness about him which was generally lacking in the natives. By this time she knew that he was the Forest Ranger in charge of that part of the Reserve surrounding the village and the great plateau behind it.

She had gone to the top of the cliff one day with her father to cut some cedar poles for a fence. Beran had seen the Ranger and procured a permit, as the regulations required. Helen had sat down in the shade of a straggling cedar while her father went about the work with unaccustomed hands.

In the midst of it, coming out of some pathless region of mystery, had come the Ranger at his inevitable gait, and drawn rein beside the panting man. He had spoken a few words, at which her father had ceased work, and then the rider had dismounted, chopped a blaze on a dozen trees, stamped them with the hammer-back of the hatchet he carried, taken the ax from Beran's hand and swiftly, with sure skill, cut down and trimmed the poles he had marked.

She had watched the lithe creeping of the muscles beneath the tight-fitting jersey and wondered at the ease and expertness of his ax-wielding. The job had been done in one-third the time that her father would have required for it and at the end the man had smiled, nodded at the thanks which Beran had showered on him, touched his hat to her and swung into his saddle to ride away.

There was another memory allied with this one. The beast which always followed him had come up to Helen with a marvelous, sinuous, sidelong wiggle of his entire body and had endeavored to get on terms of intimacy with her. She saw that it was a dog, though the breed was strange as ever to her. Or rather, it seemed to be a mixture of more than a dozen breeds, in equal proportion. It had insinuated its front paws in her lap and reached up a cold snout and made a partially successful attempt to lick her nose.

At this maneuver she had indignantly ejected it from its place of vantage and called it "a horrid beast." The dog had done its best to convey an abject apology, but she had remained cold to its humble blandishments. It had finally retired to a nearby spot and spent the rest of the time in scratching with praiseworthy industry for fleas. When its master had ridden away it had followed, running with its rump high in the air and its hind legs thrown past its forefeet well to one side, giving it a most ungainly appearance.

One other meeting she remembered, and that was all. She and her father had stood one day by the fence and watched the cloud of dust raised by a band of sheep that hurried along the road toward Pine village, evidently in haste to reach some spot or other. They had passed on and finally vanished around a bend of the cliff. About fifteen minutes later there had sounded the clattering beat of hoofs and a horse had gone past like a storm cloud the white foam streaming

from his mouth and his sides whitewashed with lather.

On its back, sitting as ever, still and easily in the saddle with his hands crossed lightly on the horn, was the blue-jerseyed Ranger; but now his eyes were directed sternly ahead on the trail of those sheep and their herders. As he swept on Helen had noticed the black butt of a revolver peeping from the fold in the flap of his chaps just above the knee. That detail was peculiar. She thought all men wore the six-shooter on a sagging belt as depicted in the illustrated stories. The Ranger was evidently an exception.



THAT was all she knew of him, though she had occasionally heard him discussed by the villagers at the post-office or the store. The comments had been largely overlaid with personal bias. Some had a rooted aversion to all Government officials and especially to Forest officers, while others had received some benefit from the Reserve in the way of grazing privileges or timber sales which caused them to favor the Ranger. The Postmaster was a Republican and spoke well of the Ranger because he also was one. Skinner, who kept the "road house," was a free thinker, and one gathered from his comments that the Ranger was one also and was a man of sense and integrity because he had no use for religion.

On the other hand, Bishop Jensen, who was young and somewhat untutored, spoke highly of the Ranger's respect for the New and Everlasting Covenant and with gratitude for certain information given to him which had lent an atmosphere of learning to his sermons and enabled him to refute successfully some of Skinner's arguments against the Revealed Truth.

The Postmaster's son and his wife were strong partizans. The little boy swore that the Ranger was the best feller on earth because he had told him some of the finest stories he had ever heard, while his mother allowed that he was a nice young man because he was sure good to the children.

All this was encouraging, but there were offsets to it. Moroni Lane swore the Ranger was a heartless scoundrel and a crook. Her father explained that the Ranger had stopped his cutting that day because the trees were not yet marked, though he was inclined to forgive this strictness in view of

the ready help he had given immediately after that. The schoolma'am opined that he was a stuck-up, conceited thing, and the village girls tossed their heads disdainfully when his name was mentioned.

Dave Lane, son of the Elder, told openly that the fellow was a remittance man from back East and proved it by showing without contradiction that no man could live as the Ranger did, wear eight-dollar hats and fifteen-dollar boots and ride on hundred-and-fifty-dollar horses with sixty-five-dollar saddles without resources beyond the paltry sixty-dollar-a-month salary the Government allowed him. Why, Bill McGhie got more than that and had a ranch to boot, but he couldn't put on that much dog nor anything near it.

The case against the Ranger seemed proved when Dave Lane got through with him, though his father thought he was mistaken. In Moroni Lane's deep-rooted opinion the Ranger got these luxuries from the proceeds of nocturnal enterprises such as stage-robbing and stealing horses. Helen did not like the Lanes, as she remembered that one of them had defrauded her father, but their aversion to the Ranger had some weight with her, though it did not with most people. The Ranger had never given her more than passing notice and she resented the fact.

She was still a quarter of a mile behind the man when he at last reined up before the post-office and dismounted. He left his horse standing with trailing rein and went into the house, while the girl rode slowly on.

She had half a mind to turn back and go home before it got quite dark. But she did not, and as she arrived in front of the post-office the man she had been pursuing came out and walked down to his horse, tearing open a letter as he approached.

Helen took her courage in her hands and was about to speak when she remembered that she did not know the Ranger's name. Every one spoke of him or to him as "Ranger," and she had never heard any other form of address used in speaking of him. She blushed at the very idea of saying, "Hey, you!" or, "Mr. Ranger," to attract his attention.

But the Ranger saved her from embarrassment by suddenly looking at her and speaking first. His tone was impersonal as he was himself.



"DID you want to speak to me, Miss Beran?" he asked, as if it were an every-day matter for him to be interviewed by young women with silky, dark hair and faces like Spring violets. That was what made Helen angry, though she would not acknowledge it. The man was so utterly self-sufficient and calm. If he'd only act human and gape at her or blush and stammer and try to be witty and killing like these silly oafs of villagers, she would not give him a thought. But he did not do these things and she was inclined to believe he did not because he knew it made her mad. The schoolma'am was quite right.

"Yes, I did," said Helen, with cold dignity. "I have a letter here from Washington, which requires some explanation and I hoped that you might furnish it. It's about the Forest Reserve."

The Ranger held out his hand.

"May I look at it?"

He took it from her gloved hand and glanced over it.

"Nothing much to explain," he said briefly. "The ranch you occupy is on land included in the Forest Reserve and, as it has not yet been surveyed, it is not open to settlement except under squatter right. You are required to show cause why you should not be ejected as a trespasser on Government property. Quite simple, I think."

Helen was exasperated.

"You may think so," she retorted sharply. "No doubt it's as simple as A B C to your intellect, but it isn't to mine. How, I should like to know, are we to get back the money we paid for that ranch and how are we going to live with no home? Is *that* so terrifically simple, Mr. Ranger?"

"Who sold that ranch to you?" the Ranger asked, with a suspicion of a grin on his placid face.

He flung his reins over the horse's neck and prepared to mount.

"You ought to know, if you listen to the talk in this village," said Helen. "Every one knows that Mr. Lane's son, Nephi, sold it to father just before he went to Mexico."

"I believe I have heard of the transaction," said the Ranger soberly.

But there was a slightly sardonic expression on his face which made the girl more angry than ever.

"It was rather indiscreet of your father," he continued, "to buy a ranch to which

the seller had acquired no title. However, there is hope that it will all come out right."

"What hope?" asked Helen. "Is this thing a mistake?"

"Not that I know of," said the Ranger. "Everything's all right and quite according to Hoyle so far as my official knowledge goes. But all I've had to do with it so far has been the sending in of a list of all the folks who occupy land on the Reserve. The Washington crowd attend to the rest of it, and if any mistake has been made you'll have to take it up with them."

"But don't you have *anything* to do with such things?"

Helen spoke with the disdain she felt for a man of apparent education who would be content to be a mere routine employee when it was quite evident that he was fitted for more responsible tasks. The Ranger caught the tone and looked at her a little askance.

"I think," he remarked, "that I will probably have to bounce the exiles when the final decision is made. But if you are seeking my advice, Miss Beran, I'd say that the best thing for you to do is write out a statement of the circumstances and send it in to me. I'll see what I can do for you when that is received."

"If you have such an important part in the affair, I don't think that will save our ranch," replied Helen. Her sarcasm sounded ill bred and stinging, even to herself, but the man exasperated her with his indifference upon a matter that to her seemed vital. Yet he took no notice of her expression, and his countenance failed to show any annoyance he may have felt.

"Speaking officially," said the Ranger, "I can't say that it will. But, as a reasoning being, I hazard a guess that Uncle Sam will, eventually, cease to interfere with you. To tell you the truth, I think those sports in Washington grind those letters out on a duplicating machine and insert the names."

"I presume," said Helen, "that your knowledge of what goes on in Washington is extensive, in view of what you know of affairs nearer us. It doesn't sound like the action of a responsible Government, however."

The Ranger shrugged his shoulders.

"Right!" he replied. "But who said that this Government is responsible? Not I, at any rate. It has neglected to pay my salary for six weeks, and I haven't a decent word to say for it. But I'm not going to raise a

row about it. I shall preserve a dignified silence and, some day, after my emaciated corpse has been discovered in the trackless wilderness, a fellow signing himself Vox Populi will write to the papers about it and demand that the bureaucrats and demagogues cease to plunder the peepul and pay the faithful and lowly Ranger a wage on which he will not starve to death. I shan't get excited over Uncle Sammie's aberrations, and I advise you to take the same attitude."

Helen examined the Ranger's grave countenance for a sign of levity and found none.

"I supposed," she said, "that I should at least get courtesy and aid from an official and, instead, I am made a mark for cheap facetiousness. You ought to be reported."



SHE dragged her horse's head around, venting on its inoffensive mouth some of her irritation at the Ranger. But before she could spur him back on the road to the ranch she heard the even voice that so enraged her.

"Well, since the sheepmen and the fellows that want timber which I can't let them have, beside several others, all say the same thing, I suspect that I ought to be called down. But just the same, Miss Beran, if you want my good offices in the matter, just trot out your statement of the facts and you will find the lowly Ranger ready to oblige at all times and places. As an obliging person, I beat the Dutch."

The girl thought that he was gibing at her and utterly overlooked the underlying note of seriousness in the man's tone. But as she rode rapidly away, without venturing further comment, she could not help reflecting on the gulf of difference that separated this young man from those she encountered in the course of her daily life.

Some of the irritation felt in his presence evaporated as she rode. After all, he had offered to do what he could, though his capacity seemed to be small. His making a subject for levity out of a matter that promised to be serious to her was inexcusable, perhaps, but he had not been actually rude. On the whole, Helen began to feel that she had better reserve judgment for the time being and not be too ready to condemn the man irrevocably.

Back in the single street of Pine village the Ranger looked solemnly at the curious beast who sidled at his horse's heels, and

addressed the animal as if he were human.

"There are girls, Old Thousand Dollars," he said, "who are just girls and then there are others who stack up pretty high in the goddess line. It's nothing to us, you know, because girls are out of our line, but, as a scientific and curious investigator, I'd like to know how she came to acquire that father of hers. If she takes after her mother, again, how did Beran ever come to inveigle his wife into marrying him? Not that I object to Beran; but you've got to acknowledge that he's not the heaviest high-brow in captivity; hey, what?"

Old Thousand Dollars contorted his body painfully and wiggled in an astonishing manner from his head to his upcurled tail. But he answered in no other manner. The Ranger mounted and lifted his rein a mere trifle. His horse moved away at his smooth trot.

CHAPTER III

THE RANGER GETS A LESSON IN EXPLETIVES

IT WAS getting dark by this time, but the hours seemed to have little significance for the Ranger, and he rode along with no concern for the deepening shadows. In his saddle pockets were documents to be delivered and ahead of him was their destination. It lay on the far edge of the village, some distance beyond the edge of the Reserve, where the ranch occupied and owned by Elder Lane and his son, David, was located. The distance was a mile or more, but the horse covered it at his even gait in about ten minutes.

The Ranger glanced around as he drew up at the gate. Before he dismounted among the yelping dogs that poured out and made threats of assault upon his own satellite, he took in the dreary landscape and the raw buildings that stood in the twilight gauntly, without sign of any effort wasted upon making them attractive. The yellow boards of the fences surrounding sheep pens and corrals and the dingy hay barns and cane press were depressing to the sight. The screaming curs annoyed him as much as they did his own dog, which had cautiously withdrawn between the feet of the horse, where the others dared not follow. The ranch was isolated and threatening in its savagery.

The Ranger swung from his saddle and

casually placed a well aimed kick in the ribs of the nearest dog, which promptly made night hideous with his howls, while he and his companions fled to places of safety. The door opened and a beam of yellow light spread on the path worn in the yellow grass and weeds that told of irrigation by means of slops thrown on the hard ground. The Ranger strode up the ribbon of beaten soil toward the figure standing blackly against the light, that peered from the opening. That, too, seemed to utter a soundless threat against all who approached this forbidding place. Yet the Ranger walked unconcernedly up to the door and spoke to the man who blocked his way.

"Greetings, fair sirl" he said gravely. "Mr. Dave Lane, if I make no mistake?"

Mr. Dave Lane bent forward a moment to get a better view of the visitor, and then turned to the interior.

"Pa," he drawled in an offensive tone, "yere's that locoed Ranger a pesterin' around hereaways. What'll I do with him?"

"Pa," otherwise Moroni Lane, arose from his seat and came to the door to stand behind his son's hulking shoulders and peer in his turn at the Ranger.

"What does he want?" he asked, as if Dave might be expected to know.

"I wish to see your illustrious selves on a small matter of business, if you are curious enough to allow me," replied the Ranger. "A moment of your valuable time will suffice me if you will be so kind."

Moroni Lane turned away and made a grudging gesture to his son. "Let him in," he said. "But it's around time fer supper an' we ain't got a lot o' time to waste."

Dave stood aside and added his wisdom to the words of his parent.

"Specially if you-all sling them book-words around so permiscus."

"I shall refrain," said the Ranger, "since it annoys you. I have here—" as he followed them into the living-room of the house—"the schedule of the allotments of grazing privileges for the next year. You are the biggest grazer on the Reserve, Mr. Lane, and I have come to talk the matter over with you."

Moroni Lane neglected to offer the Ranger a chair, so he took one without invitation.

"Well, I suppose I git the same range I always had?" said the old man, somewhat testily.

The Ranger shook his head. "I regret to inform you that you don't," he replied. "There has been a change in Reserve policy and the allotments have been shifted accordingly."

Lane's straggling gray hair and his tuft of bristly chin beard became suddenly beligerent.

"Well! Wot range *do* I git, then?" he demanded.

The Ranger consulted the document he held in his hand, at the same time extending a letter with the stamp of the Land Office to the Elder.

"You have always held the range stretching from the Blue Ridge on the north to the Clear Creek Cañon on the south and extending west to the Sheep Trail. That includes the bulk of the total amount allotted to sheep on this Forest."

"You-all don't need to tell me nothin' about that range," said Moroni. "I run stock on it before you-all was dry behind the years. An' what's more, that range is good enough fer me, an' I reckon I'll just hang on to it the same as always."

Perhaps the Ranger was losing the evenness of his temper under the domineering attitude of the old man. At any rate his ironical courtesy was dropped, and his voice became crisp and business-like.



"THERE are a number of ranches held by the villagers here, which are inside the Reserve boundaries," he said. "You are aware that the Government has called attention to the fact that these are not open to settlement, but you probably do not know that there is pending a bill in Congress which provides that the original squatters may prove up on the land they hold and that, hereafter, all land which is suitable may be thrown open to settlement within the Reserves as without. That, of course, will enable the squatters to acquire title to their homesteads."

"What of it?" said Dave, roughly. "We ain't in the Reserve."

"Exactly," said the Ranger. "It is the policy of the Government to allot the grazing and other privileges of the Reserves with the first consideration for those who live upon or adjacent to them. This new law permits the consideration of the squatters of the village as *bona-fide* settlers and, as several of them have considerable holdings of cattle and sheep, it is necessary

that the former holders of grazing areas be cut down to allow these new claimants to come in. You hold the bulk of the land allotted to sheep and, therefore, I have brought you formal notice that, beginning with the opening of the next season, your allotment will consist of your former holding from the Blue Ridge south to Lost Eden and west to the edge of Drayton's Spring."

Moroni glanced at Dave. His Adam's apple worked violently, while his face grew red. Dave's countenance took on a black and threatening appearance. He swelled until the bulk of him threatened to erupt from his dingy hickory shirt. He swayed back and forth on the run-over heels of his boots, while his father made nervous gestures with his hands and eyes. The Ranger sat calm and trim in his chair as if he were not facing two infuriated men.

"Say!" remarked Dave, chokingly. "It'll crowd that range to run fifteen thousand sheep in that space."

"You misunderstand," said the Ranger, mildly. "You will only be allowed to run seven thousand, as you will see by reading the letter addressed to you."

Then the two broke loose from their painful restraint and cursed the Ranger and his Government by all the gods of all the worlds until the air was stifling with their blasphemy. They yelled threats against him, they vowed to get his job, and they did not hesitate to reflect seriously upon his personal character and antecedents. Moroni Lane's wizened face grew red and his eyes became bloodshot. His appearance was that of a man who is on the verge of apoplexy, though his physical structure clearly precluded any such liability. Undoubtedly, however, rage had almost completely mastered him and one might be excused if a suspicion of his sanity had crept into an observer's mind.

As for Dave, his anger was more deliberate but no less intense. It was he who loosed the contents of a mind stored with epithets and obscenity, whereas the old man was strictly scriptural in his anathemas. But both united in dumping the vials of wrath on the head of the Ranger, who by no stretch of the imagination could be held responsible for their misfortune.

The Ranger stood quietly in front of the chair from which he had risen while this storm broke over his head. Through most of it his face kept its expression of placidity,

though at one of the orthodox expletives of Moroni a trace of a smile drifted across his mouth, and at a particularly invidious epithet of Dave's his eyebrows drew together. When the first force of the assault was past he turned to the door, and Dave's eyes for the first time fell on the sinister black butt of the six-shooter that peeped from behind the flap of his chaps at the level of his knee. The man's profanity faltered and halted with a sudden realization of the danger he had been in. But Moroni Lane droned away with his sonorous quotations and as the Ranger stepped through the door and walked coolly toward the gate where his horse stood the echoes of a Revelation rang in his ears.

"They are vessels of wrath, doomed to suffer the wrath of God, with the devil and his angels in eternity." "These are they who shall go away into the lake of fire and brimstone, with the devil and his angels, and the only ones on whom the second death shall have any power." "They shall go away into everlasting punishment which is eternal punishment, which is endless punishment, to reign with the devil and his angels in eternity, where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched, which is their torment."

"And," added the old man, as a last expression of his convictions, "you can gamble yer last nickel that that means *you*, you wry-necked galoot."

The Ranger made no answer to this, but threw the rein over the neck of his horse and made his only complaint to his dog.

"I want you to realize, Old Thousand Dollars," said he, in an injured tone, "that I don't so much resent that cussing. But when it comes to that old reprobate accusing me of having a worm, I'm surely going to protest. It ain't *my* worm, whether it dieth not or not, and I want you to clearly understand it. A worm is something I plumb scorn to possess."

Dave Lane, as soon as the Ranger had stepped from the door, had sprung for a rifle which was leaning against the wall, and he now looked cautiously out, only to see the object of his enmity riding away in the dusk at the trot which seemed as inevitable as death. He raised the gun as if to shoot, but hesitated, and finally lowered it without committing the murder which had been in his mind. The Ranger passed on out of sight.

CHAPTER IV

A BUSINESS CHAT WITH HELEN

WHEN Helen returned to the hearth of her father after her futile appeal to the minion of the Government, she found that he and Bill were busy discussing some plan or other and had become so interested that they had forgotten to complain because supper must necessarily be late, owing to her absence. Helen had been aware that her father was harboring some grand design during the past week by the air of cheerful and important mystery that surrounded him in an impenetrable cloud. But she usually paid slight heed to the dreams of her visionary parent, and worried only when he attempted to carry them out.

It was plain, though, that this was a matter of a different color since the hopefulness of Mr. Beran was now tinged with soberness, while the chronic pessimism of Bill was restricted to a discussion of the past and he had no word of discouragement for the future.

Helen flew to the kitchen and her culinary duties, but the door to the dining-room remained open and she could hear what the two men were saying.

"We should start," said Mr. Beran, with all the importance of perfect ignorance of his subject, "with about two thousand head, of which a sufficient number should be well bred rams. The herd, with care, should increase at the rate of eighty per cent. per annum, of which half will be males. We can then count upon having, after one year in the business, a stock of twenty-eight hundred sheep, while we have disposed of eight hundred lambs. This will not give us a large return, but it will increase in a few years to a respectable income for both of us."

"If we git the range," said Bill, "I ain't goin' to agitate none over gittin' the sheep. An' a return of eight er nine hundred dollars a year may look like small pickin's to you-all, but if you'd be'n ridin' post fer Uncle Sam at seventy dollars and buy yer own stock as long as I be'n, you-all'd gloat a heap over them small-change returns. What beats me is why this yere Ranger horns into this game, thisaway, an' passes us this tip. He don't owe *me* nothin', none whatever."

"I suppose he merely thought we were deserving of a friendly hint," replied Mr.

Beran. "Of course I was worried about the ranch and would have been inclined to move without a protest if he hadn't told me this afternoon that the notices meant nothing and that we were soon to be allowed to prove up on our land. I must confess that after I had been talking to him some time I was surprised when he made this suggestion to us."

Helen came out of her kitchen with the first instalment of the meal, which she set upon the table, after which she turned to the men and took a pose indicating a determination to carry a point.

"What is this rigmarole of sheep and rangers that you two are discussing?" she demanded. "I propose to know what you are talking about before another thing is done."

Mr. Beran would have answered with fulness and pomp and was visibly swelling with the news, but the more direct Bill got ahead of him.

"It's sheep," he informed her, as he drew his chair up to the table. "Your pa and me is goin' into the baa-baa business a plenty."

"Oh! You are, are you?" remarked Helen with some scorn. "Who told you you were?"

Bill scratched his head.

"I reckon that Ranger done told yer pa," he admitted. "But it's a pretty good chance fer him an' me, so fer as I can make out."

"Perhaps," said Helen, "neither of you two innocents can make out very far, which is what I have suspected for some time. Now, I wish to know the ins and outs of this business without further nonsense and then I'll put the quietus on it."

"It don't need no quietus, whatever," replied Bill. "What it needs is some ewes, a few rams and a few thousand acres of good range."

"And where," asked Helen, "are all these things to come from?"

"That Ranger feller done told yer pa how to git 'em," replied Bill.

Helen turned to her father, who had sat through this short exchange, in a silence fairly bulging with the dignity of knowledge, as one too proud to waste his wisdom unless he was properly urged to do so.

"Ahem!" Mr. Beran cleared his throat and settled himself with careless grace. "You see, it is this way, Helen."



UNDER Helen's severe glance his courage failed him and he began to lose his air of the conquering genius.

"I met the Ranger at the foot of the Rim about a week ago and had some conversation with him," he added, lamely.

"I suppose," said Helen, "that you did all the conversing."

Mr. Beran ran his fingers around the inside of his collar and pulled it away from his neck.

"Not exactly," he replied. "In fact the Ranger——"

"What is that man's name?" Helen demanded impatiently. "One would think that he was some sort of sexless abstraction."

"I think that it is Hyatt," said Mr. Beran meekly. "However, be that as it may, the Ranger——"

"Mr. Hyatt," interjected Helen.

"Mr. Hyatt, then," agreed her father. "Mr. Hyatt asked me about the ranch and explained at that time about the claim the Government had to this land. This naturally alarmed me, but he went on to reassure me by telling me of the new Forest Homestead Law that was soon to pass Congress. I don't know exactly how he did it, but he succeeded in getting me to talk of the various efforts I had made to make this ranch productive, and at the close of the conversation, he casually told me that the best thing I could do was to start in the sheep business. He said—I think facetiously, though one can not be sure—that that business seemed to be the only one out of which any kind of a man could make money if he was willing to live that way."

"I don't believe he was at all facetious," murmured Helen.

"Well, at any rate I thought a good deal about it and when I chanced to see the Ranger——"

"Mr. Hyatt!" said Helen.

"Exactly. When I chanced to see Mr. Hyatt the next day down in the pasture which adjoins the gully running back into the Rim——"

"I would like to know," said Helen, "how it is that you see so much of this Ranger and I never do."

"I think he generally climbs down the Rim back of the ranch and so avoids passing the house," explained Mr. Beran. "Anyway, he was there and he and I got to discussing this sheep project. The upshot

of it was that we determined that, at an expenditure of a thousand dollars or so, we could construct dipping vats and corrals on this ranch and on Bill's adjoining one, that with a little more expenditure we could turn Lime Rock Spring, which lies up on the Rim a little distance from the head of the gully down which the Ranger——"

"Mr. ——," Helen began warningly.

"Hyatt," added her father hastily, "had come, into a reservoir constructed with little more expenditure——"

"So far," said Helen, ominously, "there appears to be nothing discussed *but* expenditure."

"We could then," resumed her father, passing over this interruption, "expend a few thousand dollars in sheep and, going into partnership with Bill here, we could procure range on the Mountain in the Forest Reserve, to which we would be entitled because we live right in the Forest, so to speak, and in a few years we would be well off, not to say rich."

"If I were you," said Helen, "I would not say it. The whole preposterous scheme hinges on expenditures so numerous that you couldn't possibly meet them in a thousand years. Besides, what do you know about sheep?"

"There," said Mr. Beran, somewhat crestfallen and anxious to defend his latest idea, "is where our friend Bill shines. He knows a lot about sheep."

"I should gargle a boot!"

Bill was emphatic according to his lights.

"I done herded sheep a plenty when I'm a yearling. I ain't sure but it beats ridin' mail for the Post-Office as a steady job, though I will admit that it has its drawbacks."

Helen would have snorted her contempt if it had accorded with her ideas of refinement. As it was she conveyed it less forcibly but with just as much effect.

"Pooh! she said. "Between the two of you you couldn't raise enough money to make the improvements, which would be quite useless without the sheep. The only sensible thing about the scheme seems to me to be that plan to store water from the spring on the Mountain. *That* might be worth trying, but if it was your suggestion I haven't much hope of it."

"It was the Ran—Mr. Hyatt's idea," said her father apologetically.

"It seems to me that you are very

intimate with this Ranger," said Helen. "I don't trust him. He is entirely too careless and irresponsible to be able to give advice in these matters. If he were here I would assure him that his offices are not required."

At this moment a knock at the door roused Bill and he opened the portal, through which entered the object of Helen's animadversion.

CHAPTER V

HYATT ADMITS HE'S A PHILANTHROPIST

THE Ranger closed the door as he entered, turning his back to the company and thrusting his head close to a crack where he still held the door slightly ajar.

"Back, catiff," he growled in a tone of threat to the snout of his dog, which was thrust into the aperture.

The snout was withdrawn, leaving the echo of a lugubrious whine behind it, and the door was shut. The Ranger then faced his hosts.

"I hope that I see you-all well," he said politely. "Trusting that I do not intrude and all the rest of it, you know. Mr. Beran! Miss Beran! My esteemed fellow officer, William! How be you-all?"

Helen flounced around and promptly marched into the kitchen, where she resumed her labors. But she left the door open.

The men invited him to a seat and tried to gloss over Helen's departure by cordiality which seemed a little forced, but to which the Ranger paid little heed.

"I have come," he said, "to consult with the firm of Beran & William or William & Beran, as the case may be, concerning this sheep project. I have just been down to notify the Lanes that they are to have only one half the range they enjoyed last year. They didn't seem to like the news, it appeared to me."

"I'll bet," remarked Bill, "that they jest tore Tophet up by the roots."

"Your perspicacity does you credit, William," said the Ranger. "That is just what they did do and they capped the climax by throwing Tophet at me as I made my way forth from that scene of wrath. But I rejoice to say that I remembered the commands of the Forest Manual and did not give a loose rein to my resentment, but bore

the contumely with resignation and a Christian forbearance. But it was hard. I could stand being called all the names in the dictionary and some unfit to print, but there was one insinuation that I will repel with scorn if it takes me a thousand years."

"They must 'a' called you somethin' dreadful," guessed the sympathetic Bill.

"Dreadful is no name for it," replied the Ranger mournfully. "However, let us get to business. This affair with Lane leaves some fifty thousand acres of first rate range to be allotted next season, and of this I think you will have no difficulty in procuring twenty or thirty thousand. There are no large grazers on the Forest except Lane. It merely remains, then, for you to file your application on the form which I will leave with you and to make the arrangements to procure the sheep. As I told Mr. Beran, I have information to the effect that Baker & Puddifoot, over at Prescott, have a band of about five thousand young ewes in fine shape which they will dispose of cheap. Of course, you don't have to buy those, but you will find that they will treat you fairly, I think."

"It ain't to be expected, none whatever," interjected Bill. "There ain't no sheepman that'll treat a feller fair. It ain't sheepman's nature."

"We could never raise the money to buy five thousand head of sheep," said Mr. Beran, for once despondent. "We might get two thousand to start with."

"As you please," said the Ranger. "That, of course, is none of my business. Anyway, you can get the range if you make application in time, and the rest of it is your affair. But if I were you, with the prospect of controlling that range, which is worth a lot of money in itself, I wouldn't stop at two thousand sheep. I'd go out and incorporate and get enough stock sold to finance the affair right. A first rate, restricted range on one of the best Forest Reserves in the Southwest is a resource which a lot of people would back with capital. I know some folks in Prescott, for example, that, I am sure, would put at least ten thousand dollars in it."

"You could get the stock on a part payment and a mortgage. Save most of the money for the improvements on the two ranches, employ that engineer over at Fossil Creek, who has been loafing there ever since his outfit stopped work on the dam,

to lay out your water supply system and get one of Baker & Puddifoot's men to come over here and run the erection of your corrals and vats.

"Put Bill in charge of the grazing and supplying the camps, hire a couple of Basco herders, let Miss Beran act as Treasurer or Secretary and you be the President and give orders to every one, which, however, I trust you will not expect them to obey. Selah! There is the whole secret of getting rich quick."

Helen marched into the room as the two men pondered this rosy picture, and took stand in front of the Ranger.

"May I put a few questions regarding this affair, Mr. Hyatt?" she asked.

"You certainly may, Miss Beran," replied the Ranger.

"Firstly," began Helen, "what assurance have we that we will be unmolested on our ranch?"

"That," said the Ranger, "is assured by the terms of the Forest Homestead Law. But there I wish to warn you. The Lanes are somewhat agitated over the loss of their range and I shouldn't be at all surprised if, after several days of cogitation, it should penetrate the skull of one of them that they are able to make trouble for you on this land and, perhaps, regain possession of it, since it has so suddenly acquired value. But I presume you have a deed, such as it is, from brother Nephi?"

"I think we have," said Helen, and her father nodded in confirmation. "Then, how can we be assured that these people in Prescott, these sheepmen, will sell us the sheep on the terms you mention?"

"I'm sure of it because Puddifoot wrote to me not long ago asking me what chance there was to get range and, if there was none, whether I knew of some responsible party that would take this band of ewes off their hands, at the terms I outlined. That they will be fair I think I can guarantee, though as Bill says it isn't a failing common to sheepmen."

"They are friends of yours, then? Well, what about this selling stock in a corporation? Who are the people who will be so anxious to subscribe and why will they be so anxious? Are they more friends of yours and what makes you think they will plunge into such an affair? Do they know that father doesn't know a sheep from a canary bird and that we haven't any money to put

into the thing ourselves? In fact, what kind of idiocy are you talking about anyway?"



THE Ranger thoughtfully rubbed his nose.

"I'm talking about the sheep business, which is always idiotic, taking after the nature of sheep as it does," he said. This is why I've sprung this affair this way. A lawyer in Prescott has charge of some money which the owner of it wants to invest in sheep. Don't ask me why, because I don't know, and only suspect that he is weak-minded. Said lawyer is a friend of mine and I don't know why that is so either, unless *he's* weak-minded, too. He consults me on the subject and I know of no one but the Lanes who can accommodate him and I can't recommend the Lanes to him for reasons that are good. So I thought of you-all.

"Here's a man, says I, who is weak-minded enough to want to invest in sheep. Here's Bill, who has just the temperament that sheep like and admire. Here's Mr. Beran, who ought to succeed in the sheep industry if he is ever to succeed in any, and at any rate better than he will ever succeed in growing apples where there is no market for them. Here's these Lanes, who have all outdoors for a range and who, I happen to know, are about to lose half of it, which will then go without an occupant unless I scare up some business for the Government. Here's that engineer over at Fossil Creek who will drink himself to death if he doesn't get some work to keep him busy pretty soon.

"Here's a big spring which can be diverted to be of some use and which the Government would be only too glad to lease to any one who would reservoir it. Lastly, here's me, with nothing to do but ride around and count the trees on six hundred square miles of mountain, besides watching the Lanes' sheep, quarreling with the Lanes' sheep herders, explaining to indignant settlers why the fool Government won't let them steal timber, and declining to go into cahoots with them in the robbery, and a few other duties which I will not mention, but which are so trivial that I grow bored with them.

"To make a long story short, I'm a blooming philanthropist, I am, and I want to do the greatest good to the greatest num-

ber, and this is one of the ways that I take to do it. 'Nough said."

"Too much, I think," replied Helen. "If father and Mr. McGhie wish to go into this thing, I suppose they can do it, but I advise against it. I will have nothing to do with it, and if they get into trouble they can't say I encouraged them."

"You've got to go into it, too, or there won't be any sheep company," remarked the Ranger. "The question of recommending my friends to invest depends absolutely on whether you will be the Secretary and Treasurer or not."

"There has to be an officer of that nature whose character I can vouch for, as none of these other people have time to attend to that part of the business. I don't know a soul in Pine whom I would speak for but you, so you're elected."

"But," objected Helen, "you don't know me, either."

"Makes no difference."

The Ranger waved all objection aside.

"I recommend you anyway, and I'll take the responsibility for the conduct of the office. Mr. Beran, I am going to ask your permission to camp in your back yard if you have no objection."

"You will do no such thing," said Beran warmly. "We have plenty of room and you can sleep in a bed as well as not."

"Tempt me not," said the Ranger, solemnly. "I may not indulge in Capuan luxury so long as the hard soil is handy for a resting-place."

"The hardy forester in a bed! Perish the thought! I would lose my job if the Chief should hear the mention of it."

In spite of remonstrances, in which even Helen joined, he went forth, whistled to his horses, which came after him like his dog, and betook himself back into one of the gullies which offered him water and grass.

CHAPTER VI

THE SOLON FROM PRESCOTT

FOR some days the plans of the new-fledged financiers went smoothly, probably because the whole matter was so new and vague in its details so far as Beran was concerned that he felt the necessity of consulting the Ranger at each stage of the affair. As the objections which Helen raised to the scheme were answered one by one

and the obnoxious Ranger gave his advice, when asked for it, without presenting himself at the ranch, so that she was not disturbed by his presence, Helen herself began to take an interest in the plans and ended by becoming as enthusiastic a convert as her father and Bill.

This consummation was brought about more speedily than otherwise it would have been by the fact that the Ranger, unknown to Helen, had insisted that she be intrusted with the negotiations with the lawyer in Prescott. Mr. Beran could go along, but he was given to understand that his daughter was the only person who would be allowed to meddle with the affair. Mr. Beran was aggrieved at this want of trust, but after all he was accustomed to it and soon got over his pique. As for Helen, any scheme that gave her a vacation from the ranch and its obnoxious duties was welcome to her.

There was little enough to be done, after all, beyond the signing of the necessary papers. The lawyer, who appeared to have heard all about the project, probably from his friend, the Ranger, was ready with everything. Stock certificates were ordered and the shares assigned to each on the basis of the subscriptions of each. Beran and Bill each received shares equivalent to thirty-five hundred dollars, though they were only half paid up. Beran paid an equal sum for Helen's shares, which was all he could raise. The articles did not mention any land, but seemed to deal chiefly with the rental of sheep.

The remaining \$10,000 of the total capitalization of \$20,500 was to be subscribed by the Ranger's friend and the lawyer's client, and it was noticeable that the lawyer appeared to feel that the proceeding was unwise. He hoped, he said, that affairs would be largely in Helen's hands as she seemed to be the only one of the incorporators that had any sense at all, and that she would feel that the responsibility of handling a large undertaking would lead her to caution and conservatism, but he intimated that his hopes were not extensive and pervasive. In fact he seemed to be as pessimistic as Bill McGhie.

The lawyer said that his services would be at their disposal at any time, and when asked his fee replied that he had been retained to look after the interests of his client and though he was hampered by his

instructions, yet the client was paying him and he did not feel that he could accept further payment. The whole performance was weird and unreal, and Helen was inclined to believe that there was something behind the affair that had a bad odor.

But there was the fact that the three of them held a clear majority of the stock and could control affairs as they pleased. The sinister influence of the lawyer's client, who turned out to be Mr. Baker, of the firm of Baker & Puddifoot, seemed to be effectually blocked by this fact. But what induced Mr. Baker to invest such a sum with perfect strangers remained a matter of mystery to all of them.

Helen sought to question the lawyer about the Ranger, but the man was reticent concerning him. He snorted when the name was mentioned and said that the Ranger always had been a fool and probably would remain one until his dying day, but that there was no use worrying oneself about it, since advice and admonition never had nor would have the slightest effect upon him. To which Helen, somewhat to her own surprise, returned a remonstrance in defense of the culprit.

This affair took a little over a week and they then returned to Pine. And now the opportunity came to Mr. Beran to put his foot in it. He took the opportunity at once. The application was filled out and the correspondence with the people whom they intended to buy their stock from was started. Everything seemed ready for the final steps. Mr. Beran began to swell with the importance of affairs and to bear with difficulty his dignity as head of a large corporation.

It was impossible to refrain from sharing his secret with his neighbors, so he took the earliest opportunity to appear at the post-office when the villagers had assembled for their mail and to talk in large and sonorous phrases of the sudden change in his condition. He patronized the inhabitants and graciously explained the financial acumen and farsightedness that had enabled him to see and grasp this unexampled opportunity. In his grandeur he forgot to mention the Ranger's part in it and as he talked, he almost persuaded himself that to him alone the credit was due.

In this way the villagers soon knew quite as much of the affairs of the new Company as Mr. Beran knew himself. Among those

who listened with attention and asked questions where Beran was obscure was Dave Lane, who took a natural and intense interest in this prospect of a competitor. Mr. Beran was quite willing to tell Lane all he wished to know, and Lane, of course, took it to his father. They gloomed over the news for some time, cursing the Gentiles who ventured to come into their own province.

"It ain't to be stood for, none whatever," said Elder Lane after they had discussed the thing fully. "And I ain't a goin' to stand for it none. Have you heard from Forbes yet?"

"He can't do nothin'," said Dave. "He says that Nephi was fool enough to give a deed to the ranch, thinkin' it never would be any account. It wouldn't ha' be'n so bad, he says, if that clerk of hisn, in order to pose as a real lawyer, hadn't a drawn a good deed, but the kid makes out one that's all right, it seems, an' Forbes allows that any claim we can put up will be thrown out by them Gover'ment sharks. He says we're stopped from assertin' our rights an' all we could do would be to have the time of settlement put up to the date these Berans done come on the land, thataway. That'd mean that they couldn't prove up on it for several years yet, but they'd have all rights anyhow and so it wouldn't do us any good. But he's comin' up here to-day on the stage from Verde an' we can talk it over with him then. He's slick, Forbes is, an' if there's any way out o' this mess he can find it."

"If he cain't, the Lord can," said Moroni Lane piously. "We-all'll trust in the Lord."



THE stage arrived in due time and delivered a passenger whose appearance was such that all of Pine was soon busy discussing him. He was a noted lawyer in Prescott, it seemed, and was high in political affairs. He did not look old enough to be so distinguished as rumor had him, but he was, undoubtedly, a very handsome and brilliant object.

His forehead was narrow and high and his hair waved back from it to display it to best advantage. His features were regular and strong, his nose arched with the true spring of commanding natures and his mouth firm and powerful. His chin was prominent and had a cleft in the middle of it.

His dress was conventional enough and yet not too much so. His Stetson was narrow in the brim and his shirt was flannel, though it was of the finest French variety and of the style calling for a white collar. He wore black shoes and plain clothes of good cut. Pine could find nothing in his appearance to criticize and much to admire.

The Lanes acquired additional importance from the fact that the stranger had business with them. There was a dance to be given at the schoolhouse in a few days and the girls of the village were in a twitter until they found out that Mr. Forbes was going to remain for some time and would be glad to attend that function. Mr. Forbes was quietly affable and paid lovely compliments to such of the village maidens as he met. He stayed at Skinner's road house but spent much of his time with the Lanes.

"It ain't no small matter, Forbes," said Moroni Lane to him, when the Solon from Prescott appeared at his ranch. "Yere's eight thousand sheep without no Summer range, just when we was allowin' to apply for some more land on the Reserve. W'at's done come over you-all down there at Phoenix to let them Government fellers run over we-all thisaway?"

"They've gone and put the Reserves under a separate bureau," said Forbes, "and it isn't like it used to be in the old days, Moroni. I tell you now, that there is nothing to be done in the way of getting special privileges from the Forest Service. We can't do it. What you should have done was to hold on to that land of Nephi's and get your range through owning that, but Nephi has gone and spoiled that. Why couldn't the fool be content with one wife? I've done what I could to set matters right, but I tell you that it won't do any good in the long run. Can't you bribe the Ranger?"

The two men pondered this, but after a moment both shook their heads.

"I ain't a goin' to offer to buy that feller," said Dave firmly.

"Well, I've filed a petition in the Land Office alleging that the Berans are in possession of that land by fraud and that they have no right there, but as I told you they will easily beat that contention as long as they have the deed. Couldn't get the deed, I suppose?"

Again they shook their heads. They had

no idea where the deed was kept, and house-breaking was a thing that they would not stoop to, vicious as they were.

"There you are, then. All I can do is throw a scare in them and then you may be able to buy the land from them cheap."

"We cain't do that neither," said Moroni. "They ain't goin' to give it up to no one, now, with this new scheme of that fool Beran a millin' 'round in his haid. If they got the money to start this sheep company, like he says, they ain't goin' to give away no ranch land, none. They got to have that land to git range just as much as we have."

The lawyer wanted to know what this was about a sheep company and Dave told him in detail. Beran had told him the full particulars of the incorporation and Dave was accordingly able to post the lawyer on the articles of incorporation, the stock distribution, the by-laws and the officers. To all this the man from Prescott listened attentively.

"What kind of a girl is this Miss Beran?" he asked, when the information had run out. Dave licked his lips.

"Hey!" he said. "She's some girl, let me tell you, but she's that haughty it hurts her. Purty! She's so purty it makes you squint to look at her. But she's proud, she is. She don't have much to do with us folks, though her pa is as common as an old shoe. She ain't big, but oh, my!"

"Why don't you marry her and get the land through her, if she's all you say?"

"Huh!" said Dave. "I thought o' that myself. The trouble is there's no chance to court her. She won't set up with none o' the men hereaways, an' then she's got a sort of cool way of talkin' that throws a scare into 'em. But if I git the chance——"

He did not finish the sentence, but left them to infer for themselves what deeds he would do if the opportunity presented itself.

"That's one way," said Forbes. "But I think you can probably play another card or two. I think I will stay around in Pine for a few days and see if there isn't some way to make Mr. Beran help us out."

"If you pull the deal off, Forbes," said Moroni, "there'll be a good bunch of money in it for you, I reckon."

"I don't care so much about the fee," replied Forbes. "Will there be a good bunch of votes from this section in it for me?"

"I reckon I can swing as many as you

need," said Moroni. "It ain't like it used to be in the pioneer days, when a Gentile was a common enemy. Bishop Jensen has ideas of keepin' religion an' politics separate, but I reckon, if you kiss the babies an' talk up the women, I can convince enough of the men that the Lord is on your side."

"Be sure and convince them," said Forbes. "With the Lord as an asset, we ought to win in a walk."

Moroni's queer streak of religious enthusiasm, which he actually owned in spite of his unscrupulousness, came to the fore.

"Don't you go to givin' us none of your ribald blasphemy," said he. "I won't stand for no Gentile a comin' here and gettin' light with the Lord Gawd o' Hosts, that-away. You do your work an' you'll git your pay."

CHAPTER VII

DAVE LANE SHOWS CHIVALRY

IT WAS still raining and Bill McGhie was making his last trip as mail carrier, incidentally glooming over the weather and over the job as usual. As before, he had delivered his sack at the post-office and waited until the mail was sorted, when he had claimed a letter addressed to Mr. Beran and bearing the frank of the General Land Office, and now was riding through the mud and the drizzle to stop on his way home and deliver the same to his neighbor and new colleague. The rain steamed from his horse and slicker and Bill steamed in his turn in all ways as he had done on that other occasion over two weeks before. The slopping hoofs trudged on through the sticky clay until the gate was reached and opened and he had come to the door in which Helen stood to welcome him.

"Is your pa home, Miss Helen?" he asked.

"He is over at the Verde to-day," replied Helen. "But come in and warm yourself and eat something. Have you another letter?"

"Another Gover'ment dockiment," admitted Bill. "I reckon that means more trouble over this blamed land. Here I've gone an' threw up my job ridin' mail, an' now I bet you the dern Gover'ment is goin' to put the hobbles on our sheep business. There ain't no sense in sheep, nohow. It's just as ornery a business as packin' mail is."

Helen was reading the letter and her face

was troubled. It did seem that Bill was right and that the Government was bent on preventing their success.

"What shall we do?" she said. "Why, Mr. McGhie, this is awful. Just read this and see what you can make of it. I don't understand it at all. We certainly haven't taken up this land nor committed any fraud in settling on it. We bought it and it was the man who sold it to us that committed the fraud."

Bill took the letter and looked at it. "I told you-all so," he said with gloomy satisfaction. "I done got one o' them things once when I was sued fer the price of a horse that fell down an' died the day after I got him. It's what they designates as a summons, it is. It says you got to appear before the United States Commissioner in Globe on the fou'teenth o' September to answer to the charge o' procurin' Gover'ment land by means o' fraud an' deceit an' show cause why you-all shouldn't have to vamoose offn the same, *poco tiemp'*. It says that the affidavit was filed by Forbes & Meadows, attorneys fer Nephi Lane. Say, what license has Nephi done got to horn into this any more? He better stay in Mexico if he knows what's salubrious fer him."

"Ah! What does it matter where he is?" mourned Helen. "At any rate he is bent on causing us more trouble. And I don't suppose that we really have any right on this land after all. But neither did he have, and I presume that he couldn't convey any title to it. But it is hard to be so defrauded. Father isn't here and I don't know what to do."

"I reckon I better go an' hunt another job," said Bill. "It sure don't resemble a sheep business, this dockiment. Well, we couldn't have expected to make nothin' out o' that scheme nohow. Your pa would have tangled the rope around it a plenty, Miss Helen, an' we'd have lost our money jest the same. If I was you I wouldn't fret none about it. It's lucky we hadn't spent no more on it."

Not knowing how to comfort the girl and feeling that she did not appreciate the unfortunate efforts that he made, Bill pleaded the press of other affairs and took his departure. Helen gave herself up to disheartenment and vain attempts to find some way out of their difficulties. She felt very much alone and defenseless in the cabin.

She was not usually given to fear of being left unprotected, for she had been left so on other occasions, though the wailing bark of the coyotes had frequently given her a thrill. The village was isolated and there had never been a case of assault in its history. Now, however, she felt that she needed protection, though she could not tell against what it was required. It was with fear and foreboding that she retired at last behind tightly locked doors and windows, to lie awake and trembling through most of the night.

In the morning her problem appeared as large as it had before. There was no comfort in the knowledge that her father would probably be home that evening, for she knew very well that he was even more helpless in such a crisis than she was. She ran over in her mind all the friends and acquaintances that she had in Pine.

There were none to whom she could appeal. Bishop Jensen was a good man according to his lights, but they were the lights of an alien creed and she had the streak of feminine intolerance that is inclined to deny good to what is opposed to its own ideas. Skinner, at the road house, was not a Mormon, but he was a bitter cynic, and, while better educated than the villagers, he inspired her with distrust. The Postmaster was a Government employee and would give her no aid, she supposed, even if he could. There was no one else; there was no one else; there—



THERE was the Ranger!

The Ranger, for some unknown reason, had shown an interest in their affairs, and he was the one person who was most directly in touch with this matter. Undoubtedly he would have heard from the authorities about this process and would be able to tell her how serious it was and what to do about it. To be sure, when she had applied to him on another occasion for advice he had been very flippant and impertinent, but it seemed that he had already given the advice to her father, which might have seemed sufficient to him. Probably he would be more obliging now, even if he was fresh, and she felt that she would submit to his jocularities if only he gave her the key to freedom from the difficulty that beset her.

How she was to find the Ranger was the next question. She had no idea where his

camp in Long Valley was, nor how far from the village. If she had known, she could not have gone there on foot; and her father had taken their horses to the Verde. She decided to get Bill to take her up on the Mountain and conduct her to the camp. She could go and return that day, she thought, and there was no need to wait for her father.

She put on her raincoat and trudged across the slippery clay to the dividing line of the two ranches, which was nearly a mile away. There was a fence here, but the wires were hooked between two posts to form a gate and she got through this without much trouble. Then it was nearly a half mile to Bill's cabin, and when she at last got there she was disgusted to find that Bill had gone elsewhere, or was at least not to be found, though she called as loudly as she could. There was nothing left but to trudge back through the rain to her own home.

The village was four miles away and she could not walk that far in the drizzle, even if it did seem that it was going to clear up. Helen resigned herself to wait until her father returned, but her impatience was not abated by this enforced inaction. She sat in the window or stood in the door or paced the floors until after ten o'clock. At that time a wagon lumbered into view in front of the house, driven by a man who crouched in a slicker. It was headed away from the village and must be going either to Strawberry or up on the Mountain. If the latter, it might meet her father; and if she could obtain passage in it she could join him in time to seek the Ranger. Full of this idea she put on her slicker and hood and ran down the path to the road. The man heard her call and stopped his horses.

"Mawnin', Miss Helen," he said, and touched his hat. She saw the face beneath the flapping brim and hesitated. The face was good-looking enough, but it was that of Dave Lane.

"Which way are you going, Mr. Lane?" she asked.

"I'm calculatin' to drive up to the sheep camp on the Mountain an' take some chuck to the men," answered Dave. "Anything I can do fer you up thataway?"

"Do you go near that Ranger's camp in Long Valley?"

"Go right past it, I reckon. Want any word carried?"

"No, I don't think so. I wanted to see the Ranger myself, on some business. I was wondering how I would get up there, since I haven't any horse and don't know the way and Mr. McGhie is away. I thought of getting him to take me up there."

Over Dave's face spread a look of thoughtfulness which gradually became sly and evil. The girl evidently did not know the distance to the camp to be talking of going up there in this offhand manner, without even knowing whether she would find the Ranger in his cabin. Dave had been sampling some whisky that Mr. Forbes had brought in for campaign purposes and had the kind of courage that such indulgence gives.

"Why," said he, "I reckon you-all don't need to depend on Bill McGhie none, Miss Helen. I'm a goin' right up thataway an' I can give you a boost as well as not. I'll drop you at the camp an' drive on an' leave my chuck an' come right back fer you. Fact is, I'd be plumb glad o' the company, ma'am."

Helen debated in her mind the advisability of accepting this offer. Under ordinary circumstances she would not have hesitated at all, knowing as she did that she would be perfectly safe with almost any of the natives of the country, but Dave Lane was a brother of the man who had defrauded her father and his face inspired her with distrust and a slight uneasiness. Still, she knew nothing against him and his conduct where she was concerned had always been respectful enough.

It was preposterous to fear any harm from him even if he should be vicious enough to contemplate it, for the avenging of any insult to an unprotected woman in this primitive region would follow very swiftly upon its perpetration. No man, however wicked, would have the courage to violate that unwritten law.

And it was important to see the Ranger at once. This might be the only opportunity offered, and there was little enough time left in which to make preparations for the long trip to Globe in case it should be necessary for one of them to obey the summons and appear in answer to the charge. Her choice was soon made; she turned back to the house, with a word of thanks to Dave, to get her wraps for the journey up the mountain.



THE rain had died down to a misty drizzle, through which the hot sun was already burning, producing rainbows that swung in majestic and beautiful arcs above the giant cliffs of the rim. For some time the two rode in silence broken only by the slither of the horses' hoofs as they slid through the clay to the firmer soil beneath the sodden surface. On their left the towering height of the Rim was reared before their eyes, and the girl gazed with awe and fascination on the famous Black Mesa.

It did not look black from its foot, but brown and gray and maroon, tinged with darker patches of scrub-oak and cedars. One had to view it from a distance to realize its vast, frowning, dark and forbidding aspect. For mile on endless mile it stretched like a huge, weather-worn wall fifteen hundred sheer feet toward the sky. The road by which they were to ascend was the only practicable escalade for wagons for thirty miles to the east. On the west, one must go clear around for a hundred miles, for Fossil Creek Cañon cut off all communication, except by trail, with the settlements in the Verde Valley. There was, to be sure, a passable trail for mounted men, which wound up the cliff not far from the Beran ranch, and this the Ranger was in the habit of using, as it cut off considerable distance in the long trip from his camp to Pine. But Helen knew little of this trail and nothing of the distances to points upon the Mountain.

She was soon to learn, however. The two miles to the point where a deep gully cut into the cliffs, up which their road turned, was reached in twenty minutes, since the horses trotted evenly along the comparatively level stretch. Here they began the ascent and for many minutes, passing into an hour or more, they toiled laboriously from one groove and mound, raised in the road to block the wheels of wagons while the panting horses rested, to another.

The rain had ceased and the steep path was already dry under the blazing sun, but their progress was endless, it seemed to the girl. Yet they won to the top at last and turned along a fairly level plateau, broken at intervals by eroded gullies and covered with scattering pines and cedars. Yet, though level, the road forbade any attempt at speed.

The surface of the plateau was covered thickly with round, black boulders, varying

from an inch or two in diameter to the size of one's head. Between these grew sparse bunch grass and weeds. The road was deeply rutted and full of rocks, and the water lay in every hollow or slimed the thin soil of the bed to a greasy mess in which the horses stumbled and slipped. They plodded wearily over this endless and gloomy vista.

"How much farther is it to the Ranger's camp?" asked Helen at last, when the westerling sun began to make her uneasy.

Dave looked at her with a sidelong leer.

"We've done come about nine mile, I reckon," he replied. "It ain't a whole lot further."

"But how far and when can we expect to reach it?" insisted the girl, who was beginning to be alarmed. She had never dreamed that the camp could be more than ten miles distant from the village, yet they were already nine miles from the ranch and, consequently, thirteen from Pine.

"Oh, it's just a piece from here," Dave reassured her. But he grinned as he said it.

Helen was calculating the possibility of returning down that terrible road in the dark of the coming night. She wondered, with a shiver of impending dread, if the Ranger could not, perhaps, be persuaded to accompany her. She did not want to return in the dark with this big, rough-looking fellow. The vast wilderness into which she had plunged beset her on all sides and overwhelmed her with its gloom and silence. The very road looked as if it had been neglected and deserted for ages.

The patient, unhurried horses plodded on methodically, crawling over the dragging miles and jolting the heavy wagon behind them. Helen's unsupported back began to ache. They left the plateau and plunged down slopes on which it was necessary to rough-lock the wheels, only to follow this by surging and straining in short dashes, reenforced by frequent pauses to refresh the winded horses, up grades of such steepness as the girl had never seen. And the scattering, gaunt pines marched with them as they crawled along.

CHAPTER VIII

THE RANGER AND OLD SOCKS CONVERSE AND ACT

OUT of the wilderness, covered with heavy timber and broken by rough ridges and grim cañons, which lies east and

north of Long Valley on the Black Mesa of the Mogollon Mountains, rode the Forest Ranger, winning toward the camp he called his home, sitting loosely in his saddle, unmindful of the rain. His slicker was draped over his saddle and chaps and he whistled cheerfully to the bedraggled dog, who resented the prevailing dampness. Behind him, stopping occasionally to snatch a mouthful of grass, his laden pack horse wandered, free from all restraint, but following as faithfully as the dog.

The lightning glared with persistent enthusiasm while the thunder rolled and crashed overhead. The ruts of the terrible road ran deep with muddy water and the horses splashed fetlock deep in greasy mud. Occasionally even the stolid horses showed uneasiness when a bolt struck a near-by tree, stripping gleaming spirals down the trunk.

But the Ranger pushed on, glistening in the yellow oilskins, and, as he rode, he ceased his whistling and sang defiantly, lifting his face to the rain but keeping his soggy gauntlets crossed upon his saddle horn as was his habit. The extemporized tune was neither euphonious nor of harmonic excellence, but it was caroled forth with enthusiasm:

"Helen, thy beauty is to me
Like some Nicæan bark of yore
That softly, o'er a perfumed sea,
The weary, wayworn wanderer bore
To his own native shore."

The Ranger dwelt long on a last high note, and, pleased with the effect, repeated it. The dog's attention was attracted so forcefully that he raised his nose to the sky and wailed an answering howl.

"Jealous!" muttered the Ranger. "You couldn't begin to be so tuneful, Thousand Dollars, and it's plumb useless for you to bust yourself trying. First place, you've got the worst voice for a *cantor* that I ever heard; and I've heard some voices, at that. You sure do beat creation in making a savory noise, Old Socks."

"Second place, you couldn't appreciate the force of inspiration if you heard it or felt it, though I will admit that you seemed to take a shine to the young lady that time we met her with her parent upon the mountain top. But you'll admit that she didn't reciprocate your fancy to any great extent."

"You needn't tell me that *I* needn't get to pitching on that account, because she

sort of put the goad to me when she had the chance. What if she did? She didn't kick me out of her lap, anyway, for I never got in it. Ha! I have you there, caitiff!"

"Oorr-oof!" replied Old Socks, in a tone of lamentation. This cryptic utterance served to depress the Ranger.

"Alas!" said he. "We be two forlorn and deserted critters, Brutus, bean't we? Being thusly, it behooves us to get a wiggle on and hasten homeward to fill our faces full of food and forget sorrow in the oblivion of repletion.

"Hey? What say? Don't like the way I talk? Well, say it yourself then, if you think you can do it better. Giddap, Dobbin! Think we got all next week to wait while you smell every footprint on the road?"

They came out upon a grassy flat, free of trees, through which ran an arroyo, bank-full with yellow, surging water. The Ranger turned from the road up a long, level stretch of meadow, hemmed in on two sides by rolling, tree-covered hills. This was Long Valley, where the camp of the Ranger was situated. Through it, in a swift, muddy torrent, ran the water in the deep arroyos.

The new trail was even muddier than the road. They passed the remains of an old fence, relic of the days when the Reserve was free range. A mile more took them to their goal, an old log cabin, in fair repair, beside a corral and fenced pasture. This was the Ranger's Station, and all around, for fifteen or twenty miles in each direction, his District.

The Ranger stripped his horses, kicked open the rickety door, and dragged his bedding and *alforjas* into the cabin. It had not a very cheerful aspect. Generations of reckless cattlemen had fired six-shooters into the roof until the shakes were perforated like a sieve. An old cast iron stove occupied a corner of the outer and smaller of two rooms, while the roof dripped water on the floor. Rats—huge, gray mountain rats—rendered fearless and impudent by three days' freedom from the Ranger's presence, ran from holes in the walls, smelling greedily at the wet canvas that covered the war bags.

The furniture consisted of a home-made table in the smaller room, while a bench and a great, box-like bunk, on which the Ranger threw his bedding, filled a part of

the space in the larger. It spoke of foresight in the marksmen that the roof over this haven was still quite waterproof. A huge open stone fireplace yawned bleakly at the far end of the room. Ham, flour, a quarter of venison (killed out of season) and other provisions hung on wires out of reach of the voracious rats.



WHILE the Ranger kindled a fire with resinous sticks of pitch-pine, over which he laid fuel of iron-like scrub-oak, the dog gave battle to the rats with more valor than discretion. They were not the kind of rats to submit to assault. Though he killed a couple, the rest bit him several times until he gave up attacking them and stood at a distance and growled at the loathly beasts. The Ranger oiled and loaded his six-shooter and began a little target practise.

It was wonderful to see the skill with which he handled the weapon. A gray brute would sidle across the floor; there would be a flip of the wrist, a roar and flash; and a mangled lump of flesh would flop upon the slabs of the floor. When five of them had met their fate the rest withdrew reluctantly to the recesses whence they had sallied. The Ranger shook hands gravely with the dog and swept the carcasses from the cabin with a broom.

He then turned back to meet another visitor, or resident, as it might claim to be. It was large and brown and hairy and had eyes like two wicked devils. It had little spikes at the mouth and six crooked, fuzzy legs that carried it with inconceivable rapidity wherever it wished to go. From one of the hooked feet to another on the opposite side was a span of fully ten inches. The diameter of its body was an inch of ample measure.

The Ranger softly raised the broom, watching the nasty spikes open and close, moist with virus. Getting a good grip on his weapon, he swung it carefully back and suddenly swept it violently down upon the devil. It was not there when the broom reached the floor. It squatted upon the opposite wall and shook with derisive and silent scorn.

"Don't you laugh at me!" growled the Ranger, and heaved the broom at it. It vanished again and reappeared on the stove. The Ranger drew his trusty six-shooter. The mark was too easy for such an expert

to miss, yet he drew down on it with care and pressed trigger as gently as if he were shooting for life. With the roar of the shot he expected to see that tarantula's mangled members fly in all directions. He heard the ring of the bullet against the top of the stove, but saw no trace of the spider, alive or dead. Neither dismembered body, blood nor hair remained to show that he had hit it. In fact he had not hit it. It had evacuated that spot for regions unknown before the bullet reached it.

So long as it did not return, it was little the Ranger cared, and he went about his household duties as if rats and giant spiders were trivialities which could not disturb him. He passed the remaining hours of daylight in cooking, in a Dutch oven, a "batch of dough gods," and on the coals of his fire broiling a venison steak. The rain had ceased outside, though the thunder still rumbled, but in the warm cabin the firelight flickered cosily and the full-fed man and his dog were snug and content in their isolation.

The man smoked a pipe and stared into the fire in that hypnotic peace which a blazing hearth engenders. The dog snored at his feet and turned restlessly as one side or the other became too warm. At intervals he pricked up his ears and glared intently into the flames as if seeing something in them that was hidden from the duller eyes of his master.

The Ranger sighed and removed his pipe from his lips. He had paid no heed to the dog's actions.

"A fire is a locoed sort of thing when you come to think of it," he remarked at random. "It sort of puts one in a state where he is utterly relaxed and his mind detached from all his surroundings. I don't know what it is, beast of evil, but there's something about this fire to-night that gets on my nerves. I've got an uneasy feeling that something in the nature of trouble is going on and that I ought to be mixing in it. If I was at all superstitious, I'd be hearing a banshee before the night was over. But as I am a philosopher, I scorn superstitions as plumb debased."

The dog rose from his position in front of the fire and walked to the door. He placed his nose to the crack of the sill and sniffed. Then he whined a little.

"I reckon, Old Thousand Dollars, that I am becoming affected by the prevailing

dearth of excitement and the lack of society in this populous region," went on the Ranger, hardly noting that the dog was gone. "But you can't deny, pup, that she *is* a pretty girl and that Helen is a perfectly suitable name, and you need not sit around here and yawn and look disgusted and intimate that my liver is out of order."

The dog intimated no such thing. His whining, on the contrary, took on a more vociferous character. He scratched at the door and barked; then he ran to the Ranger and dragged at the sleeve of his jersey.

"What's the matter with you?" demanded his master. "Is there something out there?"

The dog barked again and ran to the door. His hair was bristling and he whined eagerly. The Ranger went to the door and opened it, whereupon the beast sprang out and dashed down the road toward the end of the valley. There was nothing to be seen, but the actions of his dumb companion caused the man to frown.

"What's come over the fool? He wouldn't run out that way if there was anything dangerous within smelling distance. He'd crouch under the bunk and yowl. What's the matter with all of us? I've got a feeling that something is going on out there myself, and the Lord knows I'm not given to such hunches. Here! What the deuce is the matter?"

His muttering to himself broke on a sharp inquiry directed at the dog, which had returned and was leaping anxiously in front of him. The beast barked again.

"Cuss it then, I'll go with you if you're so blamed set on it," said the man, and turned to pick up his slicker. He took a step or two away from the door, but hesitated and turned back.

"I suppose I'm a fool, too," he growled, "but it strikes me, for no reason that I can assign, that this is an expedition on which I'd better take a horse. I don't know where I'm going, but I'm on my way."



HE PULLED on his chaps, slipped his six-shooter into the holster and threw on his slicker, though it had ceased to rain. Then he whistled shrilly for his horses and in a very few minutes both of them came trotting in. The Ranger's haste grew as he yielded to his inexplicable impulse, and he slammed the saddle on the horse and cinched the latigos as if a life

depended on his haste.* Then he leaped to the saddle and spurred out to where the dog was urgently barking. The cur heard him coming and, with a yelp of relief, leaped off into the trees, running toward the road that ran behind the valley, not more than half a mile away.

"Hi-yoop!" yelled the Ranger. "Get 'em, Old Socks! Eat 'em alive!"

The dog swung past the "tank" that lay beside the road, and, turning toward the Rim and Pine Village, sped at his best pace down the rough pathway, giving tongue at intervals as if he had been a real hound. Behind him swept the Ranger, bending low over his steed's shoulder and urging on the dog with jeers and whoops. But some oppression, some foreboding of evil crept over man and dog as the ruts flowed beneath them. Pretty soon the first ceased to cry out, while the second dropped his voice to a whimper and ran in silence.

The road swings around on the divide between the two Clear Creeks. Two or three miles south of Long Valley another road enters it from the Verde Valley, and here there is a small spring of good water, where teamsters camp after climbing the Rim from Pine. Toward this point the rider, led by the flying dog, pounded on through mud and water and over slippery stones.

As he swept toward the junction of the roads he could see the flicker of a fire where some wayfarer, caught by the approach of night, had camped. He would have dashed past, but, as his horse's hoofs rang on the wet rocks, he heard a woman's cry for help and jerked his beast to a halt not ten feet from the blaze.

A girl leaned against the wheel of a wagon and pushed vainly at a hulking man who was trying to kiss her in spite of her frightened cries and struggles.

CHAPTER IX

DAVE LANE SHOWS HIMSELF

"HOW much farther is the camp?" asked Helen for the hundredth time, her voice, in spite of her effort at self-control, trembling pitifully. Upon each repetition of the question had come the same answer, in a tone that was meant to be soothing—"Just a little piece further."

But this time there was a change. Dave, before answering, looked at the sun, just sink-

ing behind the western hills, and around at the darkening woods. Then he reached below the seat and brought out a bottle of whisky. He leered at the girl as he lifted this after wiping its mouth with the sleeve of his shirt. The look was meant to be ingratiating and apologetic, but it failed in its effect. Helen watched the process of drinking with a cold fear.

"You see, Miss Helen," grinned the fellow, "this here is some lonesome ride 'way up here, and you-all didn't ask me how fur it was an' I thought you done knowed all the time. It wasn't none o' my business why a lady was a rackin' up to that Ranger's camp alone at that time o' day, an' so I don't say nothin'. It ain't fur me to go guessin' at motives thataway."

"But how far is it?" wailed Helen distractedly.

"We done come about fifteen mile from your ranch," said Dave, coolly. "Long Valley is all o' twenty-five from Pine an' I reckon we-all can't cover the six that's left to-night. We better camp down some'ers along here, I reckon."

He looked at her with a sidelong glance, but she was staring straight ahead of her and he could not read her expression. In reality she was paralyzed with horror and fright, and her frozen calm was caused by the stunning hopelessness of her situation. She was unable to think, act or speak. Her one desire was to scream loudly for help, but her throat refused to obey the impulse, or her very will was inactive. It was strange that the horses plodded stolidly along, taking no heed to the iniquity of their driver.

Dave was relieved. He had half expected screams and an attempt to leap from the wagon; at the very least, violent upbraiding and tears, perhaps even fainting. But she sat stonily, as if quite indifferent to her position. He began to think that he had unnecessarily misjudged her and that his tactics had been needlessly subtle.

Why, the girl had more gall than some of the village hoydens with whom he was intimate! How the deuce had she held the men of the village at such a distance all this time? Must be a slick one, he reckoned. He took another drink of Mr. Forbes's campaign whisky.

Into Helen's deadened brain slowly crept a realization that the man at her side was talking with a new note of familiarity.

Slowly the sense of what he was saying became intelligible to her.

"I don't take no stock in the Prophet's revelations, myself. I'm a freethinker, like Skinner. But there was one or two things he done got from above that was all right, I reckon. A man ought to have more'n one wife if he wants 'em. Look at me, now, fer instance. Here I done went an' got married early because I was a good Saint an' after a while I found I done made a mistake.

"Fact was, I made two, because the old man, he's so sot on religion he won't allow no manifesto to make any difference and he talks me into marryin' two. O' course nobody knows about that, fer I wasn't so careless as Nephi an' didn't git found out. Jensen would ha' raised Cain an' reported me to the Quorum, but he don't know it. Besides he's only a Bishop of the order of Aaron, an' don't amount to much."

Helen's brain was whirling, and she was so far from gaining any real grasp of his meaning that she could only dimly ponder on the last sentence and wonder dully what it was about.

"I thought a Bishop would be important," she stammered.

"Not so very," said Dave, expanding under the influence of the impression he imagined he was making. "There's two orders, you know, an' the Bishops belong to the Aaronic, which ain't so high as the order of Melchisadek. The Elders and High Priests and Presidents of Stakes belong to that an' my pa would ha' been an Elder if the old fellows had lasted longer an' Woodruff hadn't 'a' gotten the Presidency.

"The business end of the Church is run by that order mostly, an' the Bishops only 'tends to the preachin' end. Jensen, he don't amount to much, but I reckon he'd raise a row if he knew I'd gone and married them girls, 'specially the schoolma'am. She was sealed to me last Spring by a Bishop from Mexico.

"You an' me could hit it off all right, Helen, an' it's the truth that since I saw you I ain't had no use for neither of them sisters. My pa is some punkins in the community an' I'm gittin' rich myself. You won't have no hard time with me. You an' me could go to Zion and live there in fine style. There ain't nothin' wrong in it, neither. Lots of folks has done married more than one wife."

The blood was once more flowing in Hel-

en's chilled veins, and she wondered at the sameness of everything. The heavens had not fallen and she was still safe from outrage, apparently. The man was talking of marriage, and though polygamy seemed to her a terrible thing, it at least had an almost welcome aspect of legitimacy. Yet it was all ridiculous in the highest degree.

"Go to Zion!" she repeated, her voice scarcely stronger than a whisper. "And the others; where would they be?"

Dave thought she was going to yield without a struggle.

"We'll leave 'em down here an' I'll only see 'em when I'm down here in Arizona lookin' after my business. We won't have neither of 'em up in Zion. I reckon Hilda Petersen will raise Cain, but she's too flighty anyhow. Do her good to get taken down a little."



HELEN wanted to laugh again at the idea of the haughty Miss Petersen, with her yellow mane of hair and her brilliant complexion, who queened it among the men of Pine as one who possessed a right divine, being the plural wife of this drunken ruffian, and so much at his disposal that she could be discarded like an outworn boot.

"But suppose you were caught and arrested for violating the laws."

Her fear had almost left her in her contempt for the fatuous idiot and his calm certainty of conquest. And he showed no design of being violent, as yet.

Dave snorted his contempt for statutes.

"They'll have a fat chance to find out anything," he said. "I got them women where they can't prove nothin' if they want to an' they know enough not to try."

Dave had drawn up beside a dim path which ran off at right angles to the road they were on. He climbed slowly out of the wagon and began to unhook the traces preparatory to turning out the horses.

"Here's where we camp," he said. "An' you needn't worry none about your standin'. I'll marry you openly an' you'll be the only wife in the eyes of the law. I'll even git rid of them women altogether, if you insist, or they'll just be women o' mine like lots of men have."

"I think I would prefer to be the only wife."

Helen had courage now to smile. The camp of the Ranger could not be very far

away and she could walk the rest of the distance, keeping to the road in the dark. It would be on the road, of course.

"Well, you would be the only one that counts. The others would be just your handmaids, so to speak. They'd do the work an' you'd be the lady of the house, if you want it that way. Hilda Petersen would raise Cain over it thataway, but we'd soon bring her to time. She's too lively anyhow."

Dave had built a fire and was dragging the camp equipage from the wagon. The girl watched him for some time, wondering that she could contemplate him without loathing, as if he were some queer animal. But at last she dropped from the seat of the wagon and stepped into the road.

"I suppose," she said, "that the Ranger's camp is on this road and that I can reach it by walking two or three miles? I think I will decline your proposal, Mr. Lane, and as I have business with the Ranger, I will not trouble you any further but will go on to his camp."

Dave gaped at her, surprised at her decision. He had thought it was all settled.

"How're you goin' to find that camp?" he sneered. "It's not on the road. It's a good mile offn it, back in the woods. You better stay here if you know what's good for you."

"I think I know what is good for me," said Helen coldly. "I don't think your company is, Mr. Lane. Your views of matrimony are so peculiar that they annoy me."

Dave glared at her and took another pull at his bottle. His face flushed and his voice was a little thick as he answered:

"I reckon, before you have been here long, you'll allow that my views o' this here matrimony is good enough fer you-all. 'T any rate they'll seem a heap better than what you'll git from me. You-all don't seem to re'lize that you ain't in yer own pa'lör, none, an' that it ain't goin' to help you to git to pitchin' with me."

Helen was aware that the rain which had been misting the hills ahead all afternoon, but which had seemed to retire before them, was drifting down. She felt the beat of drops on her raincoat for a few minutes. But the prospect of a wetting gave her no concern. What she was to do was of more moment; though, so far as she could judge, there was nothing that would help her. Yet she was not afraid. Instead, she was raging with anger and contempt.

"I am not afraid of you, Mr. Lane," she said, and walked to the fire. "I know very well that you would never run the risk of the lynching that you would get for what you threaten. It will take more than whiskey to nerve you to that crime."

Dave laughed sneeringly and Helen suddenly became certain, with a dreadful sinking of the heart, that the man was not at all afraid of the vengeance with which she threatened him. He grinned at her and rose slowly from his knees, advancing toward her with his hands reaching out to grasp her. She sank back, staring into his hot eyes like a fascinated bird, until the wagon wheel stopped her.

Her limbs were giving beneath her and her brain was swimming. She was desperately conscious that she must preserve strength to resist to the last, but she was so small—so small and weak. The gross bulk of the fellow seemed to engulf her; she felt his arms dragging her to him and saw his red eyes looking into her own. She pulled desperately at his arms and screamed with the full strength of her lungs.

Out of the dank night crashed the hammering hoof beats of a horse. A slosh of mud and water streamed from the deeply planted forefeet, while a dimly outlined figure flashed from its back and toward the struggling girl.

CHAPTER X

HELEN HAS SOME ONE TO WAIT ON HER

THE Ranger heard the girl's glad cry as he leaped from his horse's back simultaneously with the jolt of the sudden stop. He flitted across the intervening space and laid a sinewy hand on the big shoulder in front of him. Dave loomed twice as bulky as the other in the flickering light of the fire, but the white hand hurled him backward as if he were a child. Another hand was interposed in front of the girl and held her from falling forward with the jerk of the loosened arms. Helen did not see his face. He had turned with catlike quickness to face the infuriated man.

Dave Lane had staggered backward until he could recover his suddenly disturbed balance. He was now dragging a six-shooter from his belt, with an evident murderous design written on his face. There was scant time to act, but the Ranger acted quickly

enough. He snatched his own weapon from its place and, leaping forward with that same uncanny swiftness, smashed the other squarely between the eyes with the long barrel. Dave dropped like a pole-axed ox, blood streaming from the cut made by the heavy weapon.

But his skull must have been of ivory, for the blow did not rob him of consciousness nor cause him to drop his gun. He jerked his arm upward as he sprawled on the ground and his weapon cracked twice. The Ranger was so close that he felt the jar of the reports. But they were clean misses, thanks to the blinding blood that dripped in Dave's eyes. Before Dave could fire again the Ranger had kicked the weapon from his hands.

He was on the point of yielding to the desire to kick the brute's features, when he felt the girl's hand on his arm and turned to face her.

"Oh, don't kill him, please!" she gasped. "Don't! I can't stand it."

"I'm not going to kill him," replied the Ranger, "though I admit that I'd like to. Is this thing a friend of yours?"

"No," she said with a catch in her voice. "It's one of the Lanes. He—he's drunk, I think."

"I reckon you are right," agreed the Ranger, looking critically at the man on the ground. "Hi! You! Stand up and let me get a look at you. I want to know you the next time I see you."

Dave rose slowly to his feet. His eye was on the six-shooter that the Ranger waved at him and he cringed as he slunk against the wagon wheel.

"Say!" remarked the Ranger, with an evil stare at the disfigured man. "You're a fancy-looking sight, you are. That's what you get for getting gay on my beat, friend Dave. For two bits, you filthy scum, I'd finish the job. Assault a woman on my range!"

"Assault nothin'!" said Dave, sullenly. "I ain't assaulted no one. Can't a man court a girl if he wants to?"

"He can," snarled the Ranger, "if he wants to take the risk that your methods entail. Where are your horses?"

"I done turned 'em out."

The Ranger turned to the girl.

"I can't waste time gathering them in the dark," he said. "You can't stay here, Miss Beran. I'm sorry, but the only place

to take you is to my camp. It is going to rain some more."

"His camp!" jeered Dave, who had recovered some of his spirit since it had become evident that the Ranger was going to spare him. "You'll be safe there, you will. Like fun you will!"

"Oh, I'll go anywhere," whimpered the girl. "Only take me away from here."

The Ranger turned to Dave.

"Take off that belt!" he ordered.

Lane put his hand to the girdle that had held his weapon. His courage was mounting.

"Go to —, you —!"

"Look here, friend," said the Ranger, warningly, "I've had just about enough of you. I don't like you worth a cent and I never did. If you give me any more of your lip I'll begin to get peevis a plenty and I'll just naturally come among you and muss you all up. Smell that!"

He walked up to the man and poked the muzzle of his six-shooter directly under his nose. Dave jerked backward and turned pale.

"Take off that belt!" repeated the Ranger, very softly.

Dave threw it sullenly to the ground. The Ranger picked up the six-shooter which he had kicked out of the other's hand and slid it into the holster. This he handed to the girl. She took it absently, not noting what it was, as her eyes never left the Ranger long enough for her to look at it.

"Come on," he said. "I object to the company around here. I reckon you'll have to ride on the horn."

She had followed him meekly to the horse, but she shrank back a little now.

"I think I'd rather walk," she said.

The Ranger swung to the saddle and looked down at her.

"Have you got a pair of rubber boots?" he demanded. "Well, you can't walk then. It's going to rain fried fishes in a minute. Put your foot on mine and come ahead."



HE LEANED out of the saddle and held both arms out to her. Helen hesitatingly reached up to grasp his shoulder, lifted a foot to the Ranger's boot, felt his hands slip under her arms and was swept upward and across the fork of the saddle. So swift was the ascent that she felt as if she were going clear over the horse, and hastily flung her arms around the

Ranger's neck. Fortunately the horse was stolidly gentle.

"Oomph!" gasped the Ranger. "You're a solid child."

For some reason Helen felt that she had to laugh at this and was surprised to find that she giggled. She then noted that she could not avoid trembling a little and also that she had a queer desire to sob. The Ranger took no notice, but shifted sidewise in the heavy roping-saddle to give her more room and clasped her firmly with one hand while the other picked up his reins. He took no more heed of Lane but turned to the road and headed back toward his camp.

A crash of thunder presaged the coming storm and urged the overburdened and tired horse into a rocking canter. Helen was thrown against the Ranger so suddenly that she dropped the belt, which she was still absently holding, and flung her arms again about his neck. The Ranger saved the belt as it slipped down.

"Don't mind me," he said. "Take a fresh clamp."

The desire to giggle came upon her again. The giggle dwindled to a sob and the little body began to shake with the storm of reaction. Her head drooped to his shoulder and she cried unrestrainedly.

"I don't blame you none," said the Ranger. "If I wasn't so blamed mad I'd cry myself. And don't you worry any about me. Just you go ahead. I'm wet anyway."

His hand with the rein crept around her and rested at the back of her shoulder, holding her head against his breast with the gentle pressure that one holds a baby with. Helen found it soothing and her sobs lessened gradually until a blaze of lightning glared across the black sky and ended them completely. They broke off in a little scream of fright and she tried to bore into the hollow of the Ranger's shoulder, which was as hard as rock, with her head.

The Ranger felt quite superior to such feeble things as lightning.

"There! Don't be frightened," he soothed. "I wouldn't let it hit you."

"You'd better not," said Helen, in a slightly aggrieved tone. "It came awfully near, that time."

"Shucks!" scoffed the Ranger. "Let it come. I'll make it eat out of my hand if it gets within reach. Lightning! Pooh, pooh! And also, fiddle!"

Helen insisted on keeping her head where

it was, however, and the Ranger felt privileged to retain the position of his arms. They rode this way for some time in silence, both being more or less contented with the pose.

"I wonder," said the Ranger after the long pause, "where that egregious dog is."—

"I didn't see the dog," replied Helen in a muffled voice. "Has the lightning stopped?"

The Ranger cast a sly eye at the black void and then bent it upon the hooded back of her head.

"No," said he, mendaciously. "It's blazing out there like time."



THE soft rain was beating on her raincoat and the even lope of the horse was rocking her gently. Helen kept her head where it was. The Ranger winked at the vacant blackness surrounding them.

"I didn't see that beast either, after I caught sight of your fire," he resumed. "But what gets me is what the deuce that brute was chasing. I thought he was leading me to you, but it couldn't have been that. He never stopped at the fire, but just kept a going while the going was good. Where in time *did* he go and what was he after?"

"Leading you *where*?" asked Helen, and she was so interested that she raised her head from his shoulder.

"Cuss it!" muttered the Ranger. "Now I've gone and done it." He reluctantly let his hand slip from her shoulder and she sat up, her face a little hot, but he could not see that in the dark.

"Why!" she said reproachfully. "It isn't lightning at all."

"Isn't it?" asked the Ranger innocently. "Funny, isn't it? As I was saying, I'd like to know what that dog was after?"

"But you said you thought he was leading you to me!"

"Well, I thought that was what he was doing. How was I to know that the fool hound didn't even have sense enough to know where he was going? He dragged me out to-night and led me one frightful chase down that road and I was sure it was a murder, at least, that he smelled at such a distance. But it was probably a rabbit, after all, or he would have stopped when I did."

"Dragged you out? I don't understand

what you are talking about, Mr. Hyatt. Weren't you already on the road?"

"I was not," said the Ranger. "I was smoking a pipe three miles from here when that pup started me on this blessed expedition. I was going to have a bronze memorial raised to his sagacity, but it looks like it was all a mistake. He was just chasing a rabbit, and didn't take a bit of interest in imperiled young ladies. Now, imagine how I'd have felt if you hadn't happened to have been there. I'll bet you I'd have lain awake nights thinking up new tortures for that fool dog."

"You may be just as angry at him as you like," said Helen. "But I don't intend to inquire into his motives. If he brought you out to my help I am duly grateful to him, even if a rabbit was his object."

"I don't understand it, though," remarked the Ranger. "Ordinarily I wouldn't have paid any attention to his foolishness, but to-night I had a feeling that there was some danger impending over some one and that my presence was needed. Are you a believer in the occult?"

"I don't know anything about it," replied Helen. "Do you mean dreams and spirits and things?"

"Something like that. Well, let it go. I don't think it was anything but a blessed accident, though the circumstances are queer. Now, you didn't happen to have a hunch that I was on my way, did you?"

"No," said Helen. "I didn't think of a thing. I was absolutely paralyzed with fright, I think. For a long time I could hardly grasp what that brute was saying to me."

"Hum!" mused the Ranger. "Maybe your personality was detached or something like that. You're sure you didn't think of me at all?"

"Perfectly sure," repeated Helen.

The Ranger sighed.

"Well, that's hard luck," he commented. "But I couldn't expect anything else, I suppose; could I? Never mind. Here's where we turn off and my cabin is just across this hill."



HELEN was stiff and tired and her nerves were not in the most placid condition, so she was unfeignedly glad to see the dark bulk of the cabin looming up ahead of them, with a few streaks of light showing through the chinks in the walls. If she had seen the place the day

before she would have been horrified at its rudeness, but now she welcomed it as a haven of refuge and comfort, never giving a thought to the embarrassment of her situation.

The Ranger lifted her down and set her on her feet before the door of the cabin, himself dismounting after her. He led her in without waiting to strip his horse, and the beast waited patiently. A wildly squirming and yelping form threw itself upon them as they reached the door, and the dog who had deserted them did its best to make up for it by the exuberance of his present welcome.

It followed them into the cabin, and as soon as Helen sank upon the bench in front of the dying fire, it leaped upon her, put its muddy feet in her lap and tried to lick her nose. Her gratitude could not stand the strain, and she pushed him away with a little scream of indignation.

The Ranger threw a pitch-pine log upon the fire and soon had it blazing hotly. He lifted the raincoat from the girl's shoulders and knelt in front of her to unlace her wet shoes. She noted that he still wore his wet uniform coat of khaki and his dripping chaps.

But he did not give her time to remonstrate. He rose at once and went outside to unsaddle his horse and turn him out, and while she kicked off her shoes and held her stockinged feet to the cheerful blaze she heard him return to the outer room and slip the soggy leggings from his legs. In a moment more he came in again, in dry jersey and khaki trousers, looking slender and trim and tall.

He was not at all like the more or less—generally less—picturesque cow-punchers and ranchmen of the neighborhood, she decided, as she watched him kneeling before the fire and preparing supper for her. She offered to help, but he refused with his slight smile and she felt so comfortable and at peace that she did not insist. It was extremely nice to have some one wait on her after the years of waiting on others she had passed.

CHAPTER XI

THE RANGER GIVES THE LAW

WHILE Helen ate the food, which was really very good, the Ranger—who had refused to take any, explaining that he

had already dined—sat beside the fireplace on the floor, and looked at her at such times as she did not see him. She was dressed in a brown woolen shirtwaist and duck skirt, and her hair was piled some way upon the nape of her neck so that she seemed to be very young and immature. This effect was heightened by the fact that she was not much more than five feet tall.

The great mass of hair was dark, almost black, but where the light fell on it it had brilliant gleams of rich brown in it. Her face was sweetly serious and indescribably pretty, but she seemed to be quite unconscious of the fact. The household tasks that had fallen to her lot since she had lived on the ranch had not yet succeeded in roughening or enlarging her hands.

Helen looked up suddenly and met the Ranger's eyes. They were gray eyes; or were they blue? At any rate they had a gentle and kindly look in them, and his still features were certainly not so inexpressive as she had once thought. Perhaps it was because they were no longer shaded by the straight brim of his hat.

But she wished he wouldn't look at her that way, although she felt like smiling at him and did smile. She felt the color creeping under her skin and was a little relieved when he casually directed his gaze away from her. As for the Ranger, when she smiled he felt as if the sun had suddenly flooded the dingy cabin with light.

The dog sidled up to the table and made overtures for food in a shameless way. She gave him a piece of venison and watched him curiously as he bolted it.

"What kind of a dog is it?" she asked, feeling the necessity of conversation.

The Ranger looked the beast over before he replied.

"I think——" he said, hesitatingly. "Yes, he must be—— There isn't any other explanation, you know. He's a mousehound; that's what he is."

"A what?"

"A mousehound," repeated the Ranger. "I have finally made up my mind that that is what he is."

"Ridiculous," said Helen. "I never heard of such a thing."

"Well," remonstrated the Ranger, defensively, "he's got to be some kind of hound, hasn't he? Look at his ears. Those are hound ears, aren't they?"

"If they are," retorted Helen, "that

doesn't make him a—what did you call him?"

"Mousehound. Now just consider this thing inductively. He's a hound of some sort, that's certain. But what kind of a hound? We've got to reduce this down to a final elimination, you know. He isn't a boarhound, is he?"

"He doesn't look like one," admitted Helen.

"And you'll allow that he isn't a greyhound?"

"I'll admit that," said Helen, readily.

"Nor a bearhound nor a bloodhound nor any other of the common kinds of hound, is he? You can't blame one of the usual varieties of hound that he could possibly be. Therefore he has got to be some other kind of hound, hasn't he? Well, then, he's a mousehound; that's all there is about it. It's as simple as falling off a roof."

"It looks simple," said Helen; but as she was gazing at the dog and spoke with scorn it was hard to decide just what shade to attach to her meaning. "What's its name?"

The Ranger shook his head. "I thought of calling him 'Lancelot,' but somehow that seems too serious a name for him. He doesn't match it, so to speak."

"Why?" again demanded Helen. "I'd think you would call him a more obvious name."

The Ranger shook his head.

"I couldn't call him anything very obvious without being profane," he replied. "At present he hasn't any name; but as he hasn't brains enough to feel badly over it, it makes very little difference. Perhaps you can suggest something."

Helen felt weary and depressed and she had a feeling that the Ranger was merely talking at random to take her mind off the events of the evening. But she could not help recalling them and shivering occasionally at the memory. The Ranger watched her closely and continued his idle chatter.

"He never had a name that I know of," he said, as he smoked a cigarette. "You see, I was camping in the mountains once and a stranger drifted into my camp and brought this brute. He was pale and emaciated to the last degree (the dog, I mean, and not the stranger), and his peculiar contour interested me. I looked at him once too often and the master immediately began to dicker with me. He wanted ten dol-

lars for him but my philanthropy was not that extensive.

"I beat him down by degrees to five, two and a half, a dollar and finally traded a busted dollar watch for the brute. After the man left, which he did hurriedly, in fear that I would repent my bargain, I looked the brute over, trying to find out what he was. It was all in vain. I never did find out anything more than that he is a mouse-hound."



THE Ranger's manner had, at least, the effect of putting Helen at her ease so far as her present surroundings were concerned. But she desired to take her thoughts from recent events and it occurred to her that, as she was at the Ranger's camp, she might as well broach the business that had induced the visit.

"You have not asked me how I came to be up here to-night," she said, as casually as she could, though the recollection of the circumstances under which he had found her sent a little shiver through her.

"It being none of my business, I naturally haven't," remarked the Ranger, quite as casually.

"I was coming up to consult you concerning a matter," began Helen. "I thought your camp was only a few miles away and that I could reach it and return the same day. Mr. Lane volunteered to drive me up. He said he would leave me here and return to take me back."

"I am a charitable soul," said the Ranger. "I wouldn't willingly harm a fly. But I sincerely hope that fellow is hanged, drawn and quartered before the week is up."

"Ugh!" shivered Helen. "Mr. Hyatt, I thought— Isn't it very likely that if the news of his conduct gets about— Won't the people of the settlement do something terrible to him?"

The Ranger gloomily shook his head.

"I'm afraid the folks won't do a thing," he said. "Jensen wouldn't stand for a lynching even of this Mormon backslider, who disgraces the whole village. Besides, his father is too highly respected."

"Then," said Helen, "he is safe?"

"But—" the Ranger brightened a little— "if you would like me to do it I will slip the word to a few of the boys over at the Verde and have him lynched the first time we can catch him away from home. Jensen don't control them."

"Horrors!" cried Helen. "Don't! Please, Mr. Hyatt, don't say anything to anybody. I don't want him hurt, and you must know that I wouldn't wish the matter talked about any more than can be helped."

"All right," said the Ranger, reluctantly. "But you wouldn't care very much if I should pick a quarrel with that fellow some day and shoot him, would you? Somehow I don't like him and I think I'd better kill him."

Helen, for some unknown reason, felt that she had entire jurisdiction over the Ranger's actions.

"You will leave him strictly alone," she said, firmly and confidently. "I don't propose to have you fighting with or shooting any one. Now I want to tell you what I came up here for. It's a letter—a summons, Bill McGhie called it; and I want you to tell me what we are to do about it."

The Ranger took the document very meekly and read it with a good deal of interest. He smiled a little during the perusal.

"They are right foxy, those fellows, aren't they?" he asked, as he handed it back.

"But what are we to do about it?" asked Helen with anxiety.

The Ranger rolled a cigarette.

"If I were you, I wouldn't do anything," he said. "At least I wouldn't worry about it at all. You see, all you have to do to defeat that move is to send to that attorney in Prescott and authorize him to handle it for you. You had better get that deed from your father and mail that to him. Here, I'll just write a letter to him for you and you can send the deed when we get back to Pine to-morrow."

He went over to the wall, where two or three boxes stood, and drew one of them out. It contained a typewriter, which he set on the bench, and, kneeling on the floor, began, with the utmost gravity, to write the letter. It was soon done and he then brought it to her.

"You see," he explained, "having deeded away his rights in the land, Nephi Lane is estopped from disputing your title, no matter whether it is good or not. Evidently they have secured his affidavit from some point in Mexico, for he would not dare to come back to the States. These lawyers are handling it ostensibly as his attorneys, but of course they really represent Moroni

Lane and Dave, who are seeking to regain possession of your land for the range privileges that go with it.

"They no doubt hoped that you and your father would be frightened by these proceedings and would vacate, whereupon they would reënter the land in their own names. If you do not fall for their little game you will find that the whole matter will be quietly dropped."

"Oh!" breathed Helen. "I am so relieved. I was sure it was something terrible."

"I ought to have a telephone up here," said the Ranger, irrelevantly. "It would save you some annoyance."

He went over to the huge bunk, draped his tarpaulin across the foot, and hooked the end of it to staples driven in the wall so that it hung down toward the foot like a steep roof, the side forming a curtain for the bed. He took one blanket out and spread the others. Then he went to the other room and returned with his own revolver and that which he had taken from Lane. These he hung from a nail over the pillow.

"Don't be afraid to sleep," he said gently. "I will leave you the guns and the mousehound for your protection. You will not be disturbed, I think. But if anything should occur to frighten you I will be right outside and a call will bring me to the rescue. Good night."

Helen heard the patter of the rain on the roof and the growl of thunder rumbling in the hills.

"But," she cried, "you can't lie out in the rain."

The Ranger smiled his slight smile.

"I sha'n't," he reassured her. "There is a shed out there and plenty of shelter. I will be quite as well off as yourself."

With this cheerful falsehood he picked up the small square of canvas that protected his pack bags and sallied out. The door closed behind him and the listening girl heard him whistling softly to himself as he walked away. Evidently he was not at all disturbed at being ousted from his shelter, and so she was completely reassured as to his fate. Meantime he went about a hundred feet from the cabin and curled up under a dripping pine tree, wrapped scantily in his insufficient canvas and one blanket. He did not even build a fire because he was afraid that it would betray his plight to the girl.

The thunder rumbled sullenly and an occasional bolt of lightning flamed in the sky. But there were patches of light also, and the rain was falling less steadily. In an hour or two it ceased entirely and the stars gradually crept out from behind the clouds. The rainy season was over.

CHAPTER XVII

THE RIDE HOME

THE sun came up, hot and white over a steaming world; and the Ranger had never in his life been so glad to see its arising. He was very stiff and half frozen, to say nothing of being fatigued. Although he could not know this, last night's rain was the last dying effort of the Summer rainy season and the plateau was to know no more humidity until the snow flew in Winter. But while unaware of this, he was glad enough to feel the first warmth of direct sunbeams on his half frozen frame. He arose from the soggy pine needles and proceeded to take the kinks out of his sinews by fantastic evolutions, salted with profanity and groans.

While engaged in trying awkwardly to leap in the air and crack his heels together more than once before reaching the ground again, the door to the cabin opened and he realized that a pink and white and brown vision, scarcely marred by the weariness incidental to a restless night, was inspecting his performance with critical disapproval. He ceased his litany of curses and tried with small success to assume a jaunty attitude.

"Come into the house this instant," said the vision, coldly and firmly. The Ranger's uniform was soggy and stiff and he creaked and slithered as he moved with a sickly sound. He went, however, quite meekly, and almost cringed as he slipped past the girl and seized a sweater, which, after shedding his coat, he was extremely glad to slip on.

Immediately thereafter he hastened to build a fire that was an improvement on the sun. Desperately he endeavored to pass off the incident by the assumption of a jovial manner, but Helen remained cold and indignant.

"If you think," she said finally, "that I admire and appreciate any such insane Quixotism, you are very much mistaken. It

was totally unnecessary, and, besides, you deliberately deceived me."

The Ranger shivered almost as the mousehound might have done.

"I didn't exactly mean any harm by it," he complained. "Anyhow, I'm hardly likely to do it again, you can gamble. And, after all, I don't seem to have suffered any deep and permanent injury by it. I reckon it is good for the rheumatiz'. At least, I expect it would thrive on that treatment. Ouch!"

Helen's manner underwent a swift change to sympathy.

"Ah! What is the matter? Can't I do anything to help you?"

She had slipped to his side as he knelt before the fire and rubbed the aching hollow of his elbow, and her soft hand was laid on the rough sleeve of the sweater. "I didn't mean to hurt you by what I said. I *do* appreciate your chivalry, immensely."

The Ranger gazed for a moment into her soft eyes and then turned his own away.

"I reckon," said he, a little bitterly, "that I'll live through it, so I wouldn't worry about it. I'm used to that sort of thing, you know. We Rangers are so tough that we frequently sit on buzz saws just to feel the teeth break. That's why we get paid so little, you know. We can stand it where a real man would die of starvation wages."

He grasped his Dutch oven and jerked it on to the fire and then took up the preparation of breakfast. Helen wanted to help in this, but the Ranger laughed at the idea. He told her that she was probably not a very skilful camp cook and that he had better be left to do things his own way. Helen had felt a little hurt at his reception of her sympathy, but when she had eaten a fairly hearty breakfast—for she was hungry in spite of the rude cooking—she began to feel her pique evaporate.

The Ranger seldom looked at her when she could see him, but she had an idea that as soon as her own eyes were turned away he immediately examined her with considerable thoroughness. She insisted on helping to wash the dishes and the two got fairly intimate over this task. Later, she accompanied him while he went out to water the horses, and noted with delight the ease with which he whistled in the tame animals.

It puzzled her to know how they were to

make the trip to Pine, and the idea of riding double all that distance rather alarmed her. But the Ranger slung the saddle on his riding-horse and asked her to measure the shortened stirrup leathers with an outstretched arm. She was to have a separate mount.

The Ranger swung her to the saddle and showed her how easily a stock-saddle could be converted into a side saddle by hooking the knee over the horn. Then he cinched a surcingle on the staid packhorse, tied a rope around its lower jaw and leaped upon it bareback. He had insisted upon Helen wearing the belt and six shooter which he had taken from Dave Lane the night before.



THEY rode through the woods by a short cut until they reached the road. After going a half mile or so along this they saw a wagon slowly approaching and as they drew toward the side of the road to let it pass, were aware that it was Dave's outfit and that he was sitting, slouched on the seat.

His head was roughly bandaged with a bandanna. He looked up at them and glared at the sight. The Ranger led the way past him without a word, and the girl hurried in his wake. But before they got out of hearing the man on the wagon lifted his voice and called after them.

"Hey, you Ranger! You better pack a gun steady, hereaways, because I'm a goin' to lay for you-all."

"Why, what does he mean?" asked Helen anxiously.

The Ranger had not even turned his head, but he now glanced back at her and shrugged his shoulders with his shadowy and rather sad smile.

"Nothing, I think," he answered. "Some people are given to talking too much about what they are going to do. I think he is more likely to make trouble for you than for me. If he intended to do me a mischief he would not warn me. Shoot me in the back, he would. That's the kind he is."

Helen drew up her horse and gasped.

"But suppose he does! And I've brought you into this danger!"

"Danger!" snorted the Ranger. "What danger? Not from that fellow, I reckon. He's a bad man, sure enough, he is. He's plumb afraid of himself, he's so bad."

Helen gathered from the Ranger's tone that he intended to be sarcastic and convey

a large contempt for Dave Lane. But she remained a little uneasy.

"But what if he *should* kill you?" she demanded.

"Well the Government would scold him for damaging its more or less useful servant and he'd probably feel a little remorse for it and that would be the end of it, I suppose. But it all goes with the job. Oh, it's a fine occupation, this riding range is."

Helen reflected on the rough existence she had recently seen at first hand and the contrast between the man and his surroundings impressed her with wonder. She was still somewhat influenced by the tales of the Ranger's remittances to which Dave Lane had given currency in the village, and she wondered if there could be any truth in them.

"I don't believe you like the work and I've wondered why you engage in it," she remarked. "It doesn't seem to fit you and your connection with it seems a little bit mysterious to me. Why *are* you a mere Forest Ranger?"

The Ranger looked carefully about him, scanning the empty wilderness with searching eyes. Then he leaned confidentially toward the girl and whispered hoarsely to her.

"Sh!" he hissed. "The very trees have ears! I am Rudolph, the long-lost heir!"

Beneath the levity of his words the girl caught a barely perceptible note of bitterness. She glanced at him, a little indignant, but also curious and vaguely sympathetic. He was looking at the road in front of his horse's nose, his head bowed and his hands crossed on the withers of the beast in lieu of a saddle horn. There was something of dejection in the attitude.

"I am sorry," said Helen. "Of course, it is no affair of mine and you are justified, in view of my rudeness, in keeping your own counsel. But I did not mean to be inquisitive."

"Rudeness?" questioned the Ranger, "What rudeness?"

"I am afraid that I was rather harsh and uncivil to you when I asked you about that affair the other day. I owe you an apology if you will accept it."

The Ranger looked up for an instant and favored her with his slight smile.

"There is no necessity for any apology," said he. "I probably gave you plenty of provocation. At any rate, it does not matter."

"It matters a great deal," said Helen. "You have placed me deeply in your debt and I must pay as I can. And I beg your pardon for asking about your secret."

There was a feeling of restraint and awkwardness in the situation. The Ranger's aloofness was in sharp contrast to his attitude of the previous night, and the girl felt that she was being held off at arm's length. Yet his answer gave her a surprise.

"There is no secret," he said. "I am traveling under my real name. If there is disgrace attached to it, at least I have not endeavored to mask it. I am Barclay Hyatt, late first lieutenant in the First Volunteer Cavalry and second in the United States Volunteers, discharged for disability after the late War. I was a resident of Los Angeles and Prescott until I took this employment and I have a sufficient competence of my own so that I do not have to live on my salary, which is lucky, since it is very small. I do not particularly dislike the work, and I hope that it may furnish, some day, an opportunity for rehabilitation."

"Rehabilitation!"

The girl felt a distinct shock as the vague possibilities of disgrace suggested themselves.

"Yes," said the Ranger evenly. "I was a man once—the kind of man who is proud of his accomplishments. I used to pin bouquets on myself and stand in front of a mirror to admire the effect. Oh! I was a dashing blade, I assure you. But my ability failed me rather humiliatingly on one occasion and as the consequences were rather serious, I retired from my conspicuous position to one where the obscurity would harrow my self-respect less."

Helen wondered at the indifference in his tone. If what the man had done were so serious he should show more emotion.

"I can't believe that you have done anything so very bad," she hazarded, with a strong sense of inadequacy.

"No," said the Ranger. "Manslaughter; or not even that! I think infanticide would be the best name for it. At any rate, I was cursed by a mother whose child I had killed. I suppose it is a small thing, but it has made me desire solitude."



HELEN looked at the man, whose face was as expressionless as if he had just made a remark on the weather. She was inclined to believe that

he was perpetrating some joke in very bad taste. At any rate, he could not be serious. She felt a little hurt that he should select her and this occasion for this display of his distorted sense of humor, but she determined to ignore it and change the subject. There followed a period of silence until she could think of some impersonal matter which would not appear too palpably an evasion.

"You said you were from Prescott, Mr. Hyatt," she said at last. "Did you know a Mr. Forbes down there—a lawyer, I think?"

"Of Meadows & Forbes? Politician? Is he a friend of yours?"

"I have met him recently," said Helen. "He is in Pine at present."

"He belongs to the firm, as I suppose you know, that filed the affidavit against your father."

"I think it was the same firm," she agreed. "But he explained that they took that business as they would have done any other. So far as they knew it was perfectly legitimate."

"No doubt," said the Ranger dryly. "But I do know Forbes, as it happens—or know of him. What is he doing in Pine?"

"He is there on business, I think," said Helen.

"Business with the Lanes, I presume."

There was no particular reason why Helen should resent the dry tone which the Ranger had assumed; but she did, with or without reason. Probably his poor joke had antagonized her in spite of herself.

"He is a very agreeable man," she said distinctly.

"I know it," replied the Ranger. "That's one of Forbes's specialties, being agreeable. Well, I'm glad you like him."

His inflection intimated that the words were a direct falsehood.

"I haven't said that I liked him," remarked Helen. "He has been very nice to me and has asked me to attend the dance in the schoolhouse on Wednesday, and I thought that you might, perhaps, tell me something about him, since he is a mere acquaintance, so far as I am concerned. You don't dance, I believe, Mr. Hyatt?"

Mr. Hyatt was dense. He failed to note that no word had been said about her accepting that invitation. He also lost the subtlety of the last question.

"I don't as a rule," he said. "Not of late years. I guess you'll be safe enough with

Forbes if you leave your money at home."

Helen was puzzled and hurt. The Ranger, who had been so easy and friendly the evening before, now evidently wished to rebuff her. And Helen did not wish to have her new-found sympathy rejected. She wanted to penetrate the man's reserve and see the whimsical look come back into his eyes. But there seemed no opening for further advances and she fell silent.

As for the Ranger, he remained gloomy and monosyllabic during the rest of the long ride to the village.

CHAPTER XIII

MOSTLY ABOUT FORBES AND HIS HORSE

DICK FORBES, of Prescott, drove to the Beran ranch on the afternoon of Wednesday behind a beautiful horse which was hitched to a light road wagon. Pine Village had never seen anything like that horse, which had been led behind the stage upon which Forbes had arrived. Forbes had ridden it upon the trips he had taken about the neighborhood and everywhere it had appeared it had attracted attention. Rumor had it that it was a thoroughbred which had cost its owner a cool thousand dollars, and it looked like it.

The inhabitants had also admired the perfect seat of Forbes and the smooth ease of the mount's gait. There was terrific speed, said the connoisseurs of horseflesh, in that animal's make-up. The Ranger owned a good horse but it was not to be named in the same breath with this one. Helen was a lucky girl to ride behind this horse to the dance; and perhaps she appreciated the fact, because she had invited Forbes to come over for supper that evening before they started. When he arrived she met him at the door and freely admired the glossy steed.

"Yes," smiled Forbes, "he's a good animal and I guess I know one when I see him. I was raised with horses and rode them for a long time. You know, Miss Helen, when I was a boy I was a professional jockey, and a good one, if I do say it myself. But I grew out of it and when I got too heavy to ride I came West and took up the study of law.

"But I never got over my love for a good horse and now that I can afford it, I have the best one that I can get. This old boy

can trot in harness in less than three minutes and yet he's as good a saddle horse as you'll often see. He can do forty-five on the flat and can outrun anything in Arizona at a mile or fifty miles."

"A jockey!" exclaimed Helen. "And you are now a successful lawyer? Why, that is a wonderful rise, isn't it?"

"Well," laughed Forbes, "it isn't quite as though I was an ordinary jockey. I came of a good family in Tennessee and, though we were pretty well cleaned out by the War, I was pretty well raised. But I liked horses better than school and so I took up riding. I used to do pretty well at it, too. There were years when I made a good deal more than I can make at the law, though I do pretty well at that. Still, the profession is somewhat more elevated than riding race horses and I don't regret the change."

Helen, who was very little interested in Forbes's history, found her thoughts wandering to that other man who was also so fond of horses that he trained them to come to his whistle like dogs. The Ranger had been even better raised than Forbes, she was sure, and his present employment was all the more incongruous by reason of that fact.

If Forbes had risen from a lowly position to one of honor and respect, something inexplicable (for she did not for a moment take that tale of a murdered child seriously) had led the other downward until he was now merely a rough employee of the Government, with a bare living wage. It seemed to the girl that Fortune's favors were very unequally distributed.

To be sure, the Ranger had said that he did not work for money, but if he was driven to his present employment by misfortune it made little difference whether or not he actually felt the pinch of poverty. Why could not *he* go garbed in splendor and riding a steed beyond price, instead of riding in all extremes of weather clad in high-heeled boots, leather leggings and jersey? It made her sad to contemplate such vicissitudes. But she did not stay sad very long, for Forbes was not the man to permit it. He insisted on aiding her culinary labors, jesting tactfully about the necessity that compelled her to cook. There was a note of sympathy in this that was not at all offensive and rather touched the girl. She soon felt that Forbes was a true friend, and in his manner it might have been possible

to discern a hint of an even deeper feeling.

Helen was not to be blamed if she began to suspect that whenever she should wish to escape the ranch drudgery she had only to encourage this attractive fellow. He was unobtrusively helpful and, upon discovering a chafing-dish that had once figured in Helen's former life, he triumphantly undertook to show her that he was an artist in the use of that instrument. He creamed chicken and made a rabbit which nearly brought the tears to Helen's eyes, so much did they recall to her mind those better and more joyous days of urban society.

Helen again recalled the rough rule-of-thumb cookery of the Ranger and contrasted that hapless youth with this one, to the former's disadvantage. But, at the moment when the two were getting to a plane of laughing, informal intimacy over the unconventional situation, she was a little annoyed by one trivial and ungenerous thought that *would* cloud her admiration for Dick Forbes. His eyes were too close together and she just couldn't help disliking that. If he had the Ranger's eyes, now, he would be all that one could wish.



HER father came home and joined them at the meal and was enthusiastic over Forbes's concoctions. He expanded genially under the latter's clever manipulation and discussed their affairs at great length. Forbes was much interested in the live-stock company and Beran was more than ready to enlighten him. He readily informed the lawyer on the details of the incorporation and the nature of the by-laws. Forbes intimated a desire to invest and was regretful at hearing that the stock had all been subscribed.

He suggested, however, that one or two of the by-laws were in need of revision. There was the provision, for example, that no contracts should be valid unless voted on by a quorum of the board of directors. That was a cumbersome rule and might result in loss, as he pointed out by a few hypothetical examples.

Each of the officers should have power to bind the company in purchases; for instance of stock, and thus it might be possible for them to take advantage of a bargain when the same was offered to one of them. There would always be a check on recklessness from the fact that all payments must be signed by the Secretary and Treasurer

and all disbursements made through that officer, who would thus be enabled to know just how far they were involved.

This impressed both of his hearers as being sensible. Forbes even went so far as to draw up a tentatively worded by-law to take the place of the old one. Then there was the further matter of buying stock and paying part and giving a mortgage for the remainder. Forbes thought this was poor business.

"What's the use of paying fourteen to eighteen per cent. interest on a mortgage and letting it run for a term of years?" he said. "The best thing to do would be to pay your part and give notes for the remainder, secured by your assets. By doing this, making your stock holders liable to the amount of their stock, the security for the notes is so much better than that for the mortgage on the sheep themselves that you can get off with a rate of eight per cent. instead of eighteen, which is what you'd probably have to pay on the mortgage.

"Then you could take up the notes at any time, whereas the mortgages will run for a fixed term of years with privilege of renewal. Your profits will enable you to satisfy the notes long before they come due and if they shouldn't you can renew them easily enough so long as you have the assets behind them that you will have."

"I think you are right, Mr. Forbes," said Helen. "That is a much better way than Mr. Hyatt suggested."

"Who is Mr. Hyatt, if I may ask?"

"Why, he's the Forest Ranger up on the Mountain. He has been of considerable service to us in the details of our organization. I should think you would know him. I believe he came from Prescott, or at least he seems to know people there."

"Only people of that name that I know," said Forbes, "are railroad folks who are located in Los Angeles. I don't know any Forest Rangers, and, if this one is all that Moroni Lane says he is, I shouldn't think his advice would be worth much.

"However, Moroni is a prejudiced old curmudgeon. He's so bitter against this Ranger that I'm sure the man has got the best of him at one time or another."

This was a much better way to speak of another man than the Ranger's method of sneering, thought Helen. But Moroni Lane was a scoundrel to denounce the Ranger after the conduct of his son. She hoped

that Forbes would soon find out what sort of man he was and cease to have dealings of any sort with him. The Ranger was as nice as he could be, even if he was shiftless; and he was a gentleman too.

No doubt Forbes knew nothing of the false affidavit that had been filed probably by his partner; and she was sure he would be indignant if he was told of it. But Helen decided not to tell him. It might mar his enjoyment and she did not wish that.

After supper she went away to change her costume for the dance; and before she returned, Forbes and Beran had progressed so far in their intimacy that the latter was already adopting all the former's suggestions and claiming them as his own.

But this did not cause Forbes any misgivings when Helen called his attention to it and apologized for her father's habit. He merely laughed and said that Beran was welcome to all the credit for these little suggestions. Helen told him that it was very good of him to be so indulgent and really felt grateful toward him.

How could she help feeling kindly toward one who was not only so considerate of her father's weaknesses but was so evident in his admiration and respect for the daughter? On the drive to the schoolhouse, where the dance was to be held, Forbes made rapid progress in her good graces and she never once thought of the Ranger.

The beautiful horse stepped along at a spanking pace and Helen had to hold her scarf closely to her throat to prevent the rapid air from tearing it from her head. There was a man, dimly seen in front of them, who was riding at a hard gallop but him they rapidly overhauled. It was getting dark, but the night had not yet progressed so far as to make the man unrecognizable; and Helen knew him at once as Bill McGhie when they had come abreast of him. He answered her wave with a sweep of his hat and pulled aside to let them pass, coming behind them at a pounding gallop but losing ground steadily, if slowly.



WHEN they had come to the schoolhouse and stopped, the horse showing hardly a sign of the swift pace he had maintained, Bill came riding up while Helen was escorted to the door. Forbes returned to put up his horse and found Bill admiring it by the ribbon of light that streamed from the open doors.

"That sure is some *caballo* you-all has got there," remarked Bill. "Passed me like I was done standin' flat-footed and I'm cussed if I could keep alongside by no manner o' means. I reckon, now, there ain't many hosses in Gila County could 'a' done that, them bein' hitched up thataway an' me bein' a hossback. I reckon that hoss is jest about as good a hoss, barrin' maybe one, as there is in this here County."

Forbes laughed indulgently.

"Or any other county in Arizona," he replied. "There's no horses in this part of the country can hold this fellow's dust, in harness or under saddle, at any distance from a mile to fifty miles."

Bill followed him as he led the animal toward the stables in the public corral. At the gates to the corral there was a man ahead of them whom they did not recognize, owing to the darkness. This fellow passed in ahead of them and had his mount in a stall when they came in.

"I ain't so sure there ain't a hoss or two can give that feller a run for his money," argued Bill. "The Ranger has got a sure-enough hoss, I'm a tellin' you. I done seen that hoss do a quarter in twenty-three, an' that's goin' some."

"Then there's the Pivot Rock Sorrell! I reckon you-all'd have to get a goin' early an' get a good lead to lose *that* there hoss. We ain't noways shy on *caballos* hereaways."

"I guess you've got one or two good quarter horses," admitted Forbes good-naturedly. "This horse is a little more than that, though. This is a *horse*, old timer, not a scrub."

The man in the next stall had finished with his work and now walked into the group, standing just outside the circle of lantern light. When he joined in the talk Bill recognized the voice as that of the Ranger, while Forbes looked sharply at the tall figure as if recalling the tones also.

"I reckon it's all o' that," said the Ranger, speaking more carelessly than he was wont, a fact that escaped Bill's notice. "But I ain't so sure it's a cinch he'd founder all the hosses hereaways. We got a hoss or two of our own. I got one in the next stall that can travel eighty mile between suns, pardner."

"You bet!" agreed Bill, loyally. "That's

a plumb good hoss o' you-all's, Ranger." "Ranger?" ejaculated Forbes. "Oh! You're the Government man I've heard about? Hyatt's your name, hey?"

"Yeah," drawled the Ranger.

"Seems to me I remember your voice," went on Forbes. "Ever live in Prescott?"

"Well, I cain't say as I've lived there none," rejoined the Ranger. "I've done visited thereaways once or twice."

"Humph!" said Forbes. "Guess I've met you down there. So you think your horse could run with this one, do you?"

"No," said the Ranger slowly, "I don't reckon he could. But the Pivot Rock Sorrell could give this one a start an' then laugh at him."

"Huh!" said Forbes contemptuously. "Never heard of this wonder you're talking about, but I'll bet you anything from ten dollars to a thousand that he can't do it. Get your sorrel and we'll have a race."

The Ranger shook his head.

"Cain't do it nowhow," he said reluctantly.

"He's a wild hoss—a mustang—an' we-all hain't never be'n able to git close enough to him to ketch him. If we-all had a couple o' hosses like yourn we could maybe run him down. We might even do it with yours an' mine workin' the relay on him."

Forbes laughed heartily. "A mustang!" he cried. "Say, show me this mustang and I'll undertake to ride him off his feet alone. There never was a range horse that could stay with this fellow. Why, I'll guarantee to put a rope on him in two hours after I've sighted him if the going isn't too rough."

"That's the trouble," said the Ranger. "He'd lose you in the rocks in no time. But I reckon you an' me workin' together could keep him on the flat an' wear him down. What do you say, sport?"

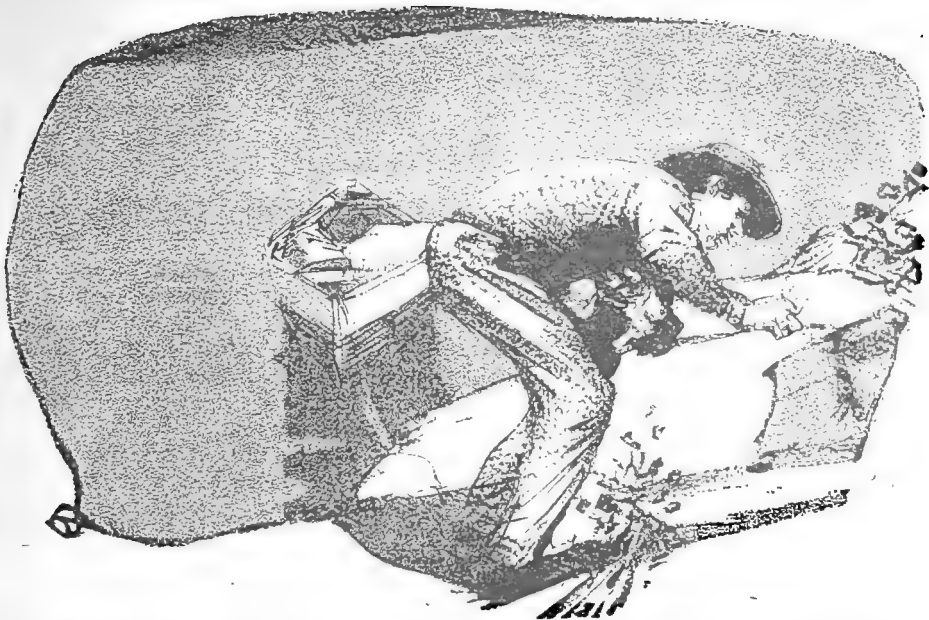
"Say!" cried Forbes. "I say, name your day and I'll be there with bells on. How'd Saturday suit you?"

"Make it Sunday," said the Ranger pensively. "I don't have to work then. Well, so long. See you when I've got my glad rags on."

He walked out of the shed, while Forbes followed him with a puzzled look.

"Hyatt, hey? I wonder where the deuce I've seen that fellow before. Hyatt! Which one of them is he?"

TO BE CONTINUED



THE TRAIL OF THE SECRET SHOT *by* Nevil G. Henshaw

THE little hunchback, Jean Le Bossu, passed his newly rolled cigarette across the tip of his tongue and reached out for a brand from the camp-fire.

"You ask, M'sieu, if in my investigations I have ever touched upon the matter of crime? If I have ever helped the officers?" he inquired, when the twist of brown paper and tobacco was burning to his satisfaction. "To your first question I can reply at once. Yes, many times. Your second is more difficult to answer.

"True, I have often helped the officers, but not in the way of their calling. Such people, M'sieu, are like bloodhounds. They seek only for guilt. As for myself, I have never set my foot upon one of their trails that I did not travel in the opposite direction.

"True, I have upon occasion found guilt where I sought only for innocence, yet this has never served to shake my faith in hu-

mankind. But I will tell you of an incident that occurred many years ago, an incident that was the beginning of those very investigations about which you have inquired."

IT BEGAN one Summer when I was fishing along the lower coast, with my headquarters at the little camp upon Point La Chute. My boat was small, I was working her alone, and so one morning, when I felt the approach of a sudden illness, I put back to the camp as fast as the wind could carry me. That night I was delirious. By sunrise the following morning the bay was dotted with the sails of my fleeing companions.

I have never known when or how I took the fever. Perhaps it came from a ship to which I had sold some stores in the Gulf. Perhaps it was in the air itself. At all events, there I lay deserted and ill upon the Point, with only the gulls to mock at my helplessness.

They told me afterward that I was alone two days. I do not know. I only remember becoming conscious after many ages of suffering to find myself in the care of a huge, kindly, gray-bearded man. His name was Pepin Leblanc, he said, and he would stay with me until I was well again. Then I slept and awoke so far upon the road to recovery that, when Leblanc was taken a few days later, I was able to leave my bunk and attend him in turn.

Leblanc died within twenty-four hours. It is a curious thing, M'sieu, that yellow fever. There was I, a mere twisted atom, alive and unconquered, while my companion, despite his great size and strength, had not lasted between two suns. I buried him upon the beach, and set up a cross of driftwood. Since then the idea of death has been made less terrible for me by the thought that I may meet him in that other world. He was a man.

But it was not until I once more made the mainland that I learned of what a man Pepin Leblanc really had been. Up to then I thought of him only as some kind-hearted stranger who, landing at the Point, and finding me alone and ill, had stayed on to tend me. Now I discovered that he had gone to me deliberately, and with a full knowledge of my dreadful disease.

Meeting Leblanc in the Bay, my companions had told him of their flight and of my desertion. At once he had denounced them as cowards, demanding that some one be sent back at once, and upon their refusal declared that he would go himself, if only they would lend him a boat. This also they refused, fearing infection, and, being upon the boat of a friend, Leblanc had finally to turn homeward for a craft of his own. Thus occurred the delay of two days. Thus also had this brave, great-hearted man sacrificed his life for that of one wholly unknown to him.

I will say no more of him, M'sieu. Some things are beyond the power of expression even as he was beyond the power of repayment by myself. Yet I felt that there must still be those to whom I might show my gratitude, and to this end I inquired carefully into the matter of his family.

Of his blood, so I learned, there remained but a single son. This son, a young man of the same name, now dwelt at the town of Landry, where he followed the occupation of a hunter.

"*Bien*, young Pepin!" I said to myself. "If I do not for you that which I would have done for your father, it will be only for want of an opportunity."

And that very day, turning my back upon the fishing, I set forth up Bayou Des Arbres toward Landry.



I FOUND the son in the bar of Old Pierre's coffee house. He was a young, handsome fellow, of tremendous size and strength, and about his jaw there was a certain squareness which, in the father, had been hidden from me by the older man's heavy beard. One glance at that jaw, and I knew why old Pepin had set forth to my rescue.

But the mouth above young Pepin's heritage was loose and slack, while in his eyes there burned a light of reckless audacity. That he had drunk deeply, that the liquor had served to string taut an already sensitive nature, could be plainly seen.

"You are young Pepin Leblanc?" I asked him.

"That is my name," he returned. "As for my youthfulness, I will match it against the age of any man."

"Then I would have a word with you," I continued, ignoring his last remark. "Let us go into the card room, where we will be more private."

The young man stared at me for a moment with half drunken curiosity, and then caught up a huge, long-barreled gun which stood beside him against the bar.

"*Bien!*" said he. "If you will order a bottle, I am your man. Words are ever dry things as compared to deeds."

Once in the card room I filled a glass and offered it across the greasy table.

"Drink and do not wait for me," I advised. "I am an abstainer."

"Why?" he inquired shortly.

"Because I am a hunter," I replied. "Such a business calls for a clear eye and a steady hand."

"And am I not also a hunter?" he began hotly.

He paused, flushed, and added with rather a shamefaced air:

"But no matter. To your business, my friend."

I had made a bad beginning, but I had learned several things. He was young, he was quick-tempered, he was vain, yet he seemed possessed of manhood enough to

recognize and deplore his own shortcomings. Quickly yet fully I told him of all that his father had done for me, ending with as fine eulogy upon the dead man as my poor words would allow.

When I had finished he looked down at the table with a cloud of genuine grief in his eyes, and I noticed that, although his hand reached out once or twice toward the liquor, it always paused when half way.

"Yes," said he finally. "It was a brave deed. He was that way, my father. But you have still failed to explain your business. What would you have of me?"

"Nothing," I replied. "It is rather, what would you have of myself. I owe your father a great debt which is beyond repayment to him. Therefore I have come to you. Command me as you will. My very life is yours, and gladly, for the asking."

At this he again stared at me until, apparently assured of my seriousness, he broke into a loud laugh, half of amusement, half of contempt.

"*Dieu*, little man!" he cried. "I want nothing of you. If this matter is to call for some great deed in return, it seems to me that the task would descend more fittingly upon myself."

"There are other things besides size and strength," I pointed out to him. "Also, it is ever good to have a friend. Perhaps, after all, you will find need of me some day. I have only come to tell you that I will be ready when that day arrives."

As if he considered our conversation at an end, Leblanc reached out for his gun, which he had leaned against the wall behind him.

"Very well, little man," said he, with the air of one humoring a child. "Then I will accept your friendship. As for your aid, you may rest assured that I shall never call for it as long as I can load and sight this other old friend of mine."

And, swinging his gun to the table, he laid upon it an affectionate hand.

Now in those days, M'sieu, save for the sportsmen who came from the city, breech-loaders were unknown among us. Yet, even in that day of heavy muzzle-loaders, this gun of Leblanc's drew my attention. Huge, ancient, and of a bore that I have never seen equaled for size, it seemed a fitting weapon for the young giant before me.

"It was my father's," explained Leblanc. "Also, despite its size, it has yet to lose the

prize at a shooting-match. Shot or ball, it is ever the same."

Passing out into the bar, we were met by a stout, red-faced man whom I recognized as Lamar, the Sheriff of Landry. As he was a candidate for reelection, and as the voting was not far off, he was striving for that popularity which is born of the drawing of a cork.

"*Hola*, you Pepin," he called to my companion. "You are just in time. Also, I have a piece of news for you. Know now that your half mile of pot metal will win no other matches from me. What would you say to a breech-loader, a little pin-fire, a rapier to your broad-ax, eh?"

"I should say that, to those in the woods, the broad-ax is the better tool," replied Leblanc instantly.

At this, to the Sheriff's discomfiture, a laugh went up, under cover of which I slipped outside. Truly, I thought, this young, quick-spoken giant could need no aid from such a one as myself. But as I owned a hut in the Grand Woods, at the edge of the town, and as the approaching hunting season would have soon called me to this hut, I felt that my visit had not been made in vain.



DURING the time that I spent in the woods I heard much of young Pepin Leblanc. Rash, fiery, intemperate when prosperous, industrious only when penniless, his character was far from a model one. Yet his quick wit, his generosity, and his usual sunniness of disposition had endeared him to those at Landry. Men spoke of his friendship with a note of pride; the housewives deplored his recklessness only to break off with a smile for his handsome face; while the maidens, glancing down demurely at sight of him, were yet ready to surrender at a single word.

But Leblanc had not spoken that word. Instead, ignoring the more humble town folk, he had, with his usual audacity, set his heart upon the daughter of Davide Domain.

Now at that time, M'sieu, Davide Domain was a prominent figure in the country about Landry. Rich, shrewd, a planter of note, he had ever been spoken of as a leader among our kind. Now, by declaring himself a candidate for Sheriff against Lamar he was preparing to lead in deeds as well as words. When I add that he was a widower of many years, and that his whole interest

centered in the pretty Fortune, his only child, you will perhaps understand the true hopelessness of Leblanc's desire.

A short time after my arrival, having been informed of the affair, and of his daughter's growing regard for the young hunter, Domain had disposed of the matter in his usual way.

"So!" he had said. "As I am a candidate for office, and as Lamar, despite his friendliness, is but awaiting some indiscretion to use against me, I can not now give this young *vaurien* the thrashing which his impudence so richly deserves. I shall, however, interview him upon the first opportunity."

Thus spoke Domain, and upon the following Sunday he made good his words. It was after mass, just when the people had scattered before the church, and Leblanc had stepped forward for a word with the pretty Fortune. Placing himself in his path Domain spoke, quietly, yet in a voice that could be heard by all.

"Why persist in that which is beyond you, M'sieu?" he inquired. "Believe me, never while I live shall my daughter become your wife."

The young man flushed, but his quickness of tongue did not desert him.

"That is your affair, M'sieu," he replied. "I should think, however, that it would be more comfortable for you to witness our happiness alive."

At this a ripple of amusement came from the crowd, whereat Domain's voice rose in a shout of fury.

"So!" he cried. "I should have known better than to have wasted my politeness upon such a one as yourself. Know now that your first remark to my daughter shall be answered with my whip. For your second I shall reserve my gun."

And, seizing his daughter by the arm, he marched angrily through the crowd and away.

As for Leblanc, with a muttered remark that two could play at such a game, he swaggered off toward the coffee house. It was a small affair, yet the political aspirations of Domain caused it to be thoroughly discussed. So far the race for Sheriff had been conducted in such a quiet, friendly manner that this incident was eagerly seized upon by those who were accustomed to a more active campaign.

Leblanc had many well-wishers that day

among the friends of Sheriff Lamar; and when, having business upon the lower coast, I passed him that afternoon in my boat, the young man was in a condition well nigh maudlin.

"*Hola*, little man," he mocked me from the bayou bank. "Are you then deserting me at the first sign of trouble?"

"I will be with you in the trouble," I called back to him. "Your present friends will suffice for the time."

II



FOR two weeks I stayed upon the lower coast, repairing my blinds, and taking my toll of the incoming flights. Then, as I was leisurely beating my way homeward, I met with a boat down from Bayou Des Arbres and Landry. Five minutes after meeting this boat I had forgotten the blinds, the game, everything, save the necessity for my immediate return.

It was terrible news that I heard, M'sieu. Leblanc had killed Davide Domain. Meeting him at a point of woods which jutted out upon the parish road, he had shot the planter with his great gun. Although no one had witnessed the actual shooting, a passer-by had found the two together immediately after the shot, and had even been told by Domain with his last breath, that Leblanc was the murderer. Also, Domain had been unarmed. Now Leblanc lay in jail at Landry, where he awaited an immediate trial.

Pushing on to Landry, I went at once to the jail, where I found a very different Leblanc from the laughing, maudlin creature who had mocked at me but two weeks before. Ah, M'sieu, that square jaw had been brought in contact too often with the rim of a glass. He looked aged and bent; he seemed almost to have shrunk from his former size. When I entered he was seated upon the edge of his bunk, and it was not until I had spoken to him that he recognized my presence by so much as the movement of a muscle.

"Leblanc!" I cried. "Why did you not send for me?"

At this he slowly raised his head to stare at me. Already his face was gray and lined, while in his eyes there was the vague bewilderment of one who has been stunned by some sudden blow.

"Send for you?" he asked dully. He

paused, drew a hand across his brow, and continued with a faint note of recognition:

"Ah, yes. I remember now. Then you have not come to revile me, little man?"

"I have come to aid you, as I promised," I replied. "To prove, if possible, your innocence."

With a sudden spring Leblanc came to his feet and seized my hand. The man was transformed. His eyes shone; even a faint flush of his old, healthy color returned.

"Then you believe in me?" he cried. "*Dieu*, but you know not what that means. They have all turned against me—my friends. They come only to curse, to revile me. Ah, little man, even if you are lying, say that you believe in me again!"

"Of course I believe in you, Leblanc," I soothed him. "I believe, if for no other reason than that you are your father's son. Also, you may trust me to the end. And now for your story."

At my final words Leblanc collapsed suddenly into his former state of despair. His eyes dulled, his head drooped. When he spoke it was in the flat, mechanical tones of one repeating an oft-recited lesson.

"I was coming out of the woods at the point," he began. "I had just shot a squirrel. I heard the report of a gun, followed by a cry, and I ran forward to investigate."

"I found M'sieu Domain upon the little strip of marsh which separates the point from the parish road. He was shot through the stomach, and he was dying. I lifted him. I asked who had fired the shot, but he could not speak."

"Then I heard a noise from the road, and Norres, the market gardener, came running up. Norres asked M'sieu Domain if he were badly hurt, and who had shot him, and M'sieu Domain found his voice."

"It is death," he whispered.

"Then he spoke my name, gasped, and died. Afterward the Sheriff took me to this jail. It is all quite clear, little man. Surely you can see it?"

He gazed at me entreatingly, while I repaired at once to the details of the affair.

"Your gun?" I asked. "It was unloaded when you found him?"

"Most certainly," he replied. "Had I not just fired? Was not my hunting over for the day? Why reload for the journey home? I was coming out of the woods at the point, I tell you. I had just shot a squirrel——"

And word for word he repeated his former tale.

I questioned him, I pled with him, I sought to divert his attention, but all to no avail. Always he would repeat his story, reciting it parrot-like, with never the changing of a word. Evidently he had been told to arrange his defense, to have it perfect, and, in the long hours of his confinement, the matter had finally come to obsess him.

Leaving him in despair, I went at once to the scene of the murder, but the spot proved equally as hopeless. From the parish road far into the point of trees the ground had been tramped by the curious crowds beyond the possibility of even the faintest trail.

I returned to my hut and, as I often did in moments of perplexity, sat down to talk over the matter with my dog. This dog, a cocker spaniel, had injured her leg some years before, and had then been given to me by her owner, a sportsman from the city. Her name was Vixen and, although she would always be a little lame, I found her invaluable in the hunting of woodcock. For the rest she was my constant companion, the sharer of my hearth, and of my confidences and observations.

And so, with the little dog beside me, I went over each detail of the affair of Leblanc, but strive as I would, I could see in it no ray of hope. Indeed, the more I thought, the more apparent became the hunter's guilt, until I was forced, as it were, to take hold of my trust in both hands.

"*Dieu*, Vixen!" I cried at last. "We can not continue thus. We are beginning at the wrong end. If we would keep our belief, we must forget all that has gone before."



FOR five days I groped blindly for some gleam of light in this dreadful affair, and then Leblanc was brought to trial. It was a special trial, for the people were beginning to grumble, and already there were threats of violence. Although Domain had ever been considered a popular man, it was not until after his death that the full extent of his popularity became known. Indeed it was agreed by all that, had the planter lived, Lamar would have been hopelessly beaten in the coming election.

Of the trial I need tell you little. Save

for its form it might very well have been dispensed with, since, for weeks before, its outcome had been certain. Yet, with the cruel patience of their kind, the lawyers drew out each damning bit of evidence, piling it into a mountain of guilt.

Beginning with Leblanc's quick temper, his rashness, his drunkenness, they passed on to his quarrel with Domain. They reviewed the scene before the church, they twisted the idle words of the hunter into a deadly threat, they even used, to their advantage, the actual threats that had been made by the murdered man. Then came the physician, who testified as to the wound. It was enormous, he said, and it went clear through. Save for the great weapon of Leblanc, he knew of no gun in all the country which, even at the closest range, could have torn such a terrible hole.

But most convincing of all was the testimony of Norres. Quiet, intelligent, and of an exceptional honesty and truthfulness, the market gardener told a story that would have convicted a saint.

He was driving along the parish road, he said, when, at a spot not far from the curve before the point of trees, he heard a shot followed by a cry. Whipping up his horse, he rounded the curve in time to see a man lying upon the marsh, with a second man bending over him. The second man held a gun, and through his size Norres recognized him, even at that distance, as Pepin Leblanc.

On arriving at the scene of the trouble he found the fallen man to be Davide Domain and, recognizing the necessity for immediate action, he asked two questions.

"Are you badly injured, Domain?" he first inquired. Next he demanded, "And who was your assailant?"

"*C'est la mort*—it is death," replied Domain, answering the first question. Then, with his final breath he prepared to answer the second.

"Leblanc," he began, and, gasping, fell back dead.

As for the defense, M'sieu, there was none. True, the young lawyer who had been appointed to defend Leblanc put his client upon the stand, but even in a more promising case the act would have been fatal. Dazed, bewildered, the hunter mouthed out his hopeless, mechanical story, while the spectators followed the well known words with a growl of execration.

In the end, and scarce waiting for the

ceremony of a vote, the jury declared Leblanc guilty, and the judge sentenced him to die in the first week of the new year.

That night I found it hard to look into the yellow depths of Vixen's eyes. In some way, since the testimony of Norres, I had a sense of guilt in thus wishing to aid Leblanc. Had he not been convicted in fair trial? Had not the dying man accused him with his final breath? "Leblanc," he had said. What could be more certain?

And yet, there was that grave, with its driftwood cross, upon Point La Chute. There was my promise to aid my rescuer's son.

I must believe, I told myself. Otherwise I could not keep on. I must begin at once, and I must strive unceasingly for the truth. It was then the middle of November. If I were to accomplish anything, it must be within those few weeks that still remained of the old year.



OF MY efforts during the month that followed, it will suffice to say that they were as earnest as they were futile. In the first place I was wholly untrained in the unraveling of such tangles. I was only a simple hunter, seeking to aid a friend, and I had, as you might say, not even the faintest suspicion of a suspicion to work upon. Leblanc, who might have helped much, proved utterly hopeless. To my inquiries, my pleadings, he could only reply with his monotonous, parrot-like story. As for the scene of the murder, its marsh, soaked by the rains of Fall, was now little better than a bog.

True, there were two details of this terrible affair which suggested a doubt of Leblanc's guilt. First Domain's wound had been in a peculiar place. When in a passion, our folk do not shoot at the stomach—especially with a gun. The weapon is discharged as it reaches the shoulder. Its level is invariably that of the victim's breast. Leblanc was tall; Domain had been short. Therefore, Leblanc would have been forced to aim deliberately downward, an act scarcely compatible with his violence of temper.

True, through the position of the body, and the close proximity of the trees, it was evident that the shot had been fired from ambush, but this point only gave rise to the second detail. When one commits murder from ambush, one does not usually slip

out afterward to gloat over one's victim, especially should this victim lie in full view from a public highway. But save for their assistance in keeping alive what belief I had in Leblanc's innocence, these details were of no further use to me.

And so, M'sieu, finding myself wholly without aid of a material sort, I was forced to fall back upon such powers of reasoning as I found myself possessed of. If, as I had made myself believe, Leblanc was innocent, it must naturally follow that another had committed the murder. Therefore, it was now rather a question of fastening the guilt upon this other one than of proving the innocence of my friend. First, casting aside for the moment the last damning bit of evidence against Leblanc, I must seek to fasten my suspicion upon some one. Later, as I worked up this suspicion, the evidence would, of a necessity, explain itself away.

In theory this seemed a most excellent mode of procedure, but in practise it proved equally as fruitless as had been my former efforts. Save in the case of Leblanc, Domain, I found, had been at peace with every one. Honored, respected, it was impossible to find a single man who would have attacked his good name, let alone his life. True, he had been Lamar's political opponent, but I passed this by without a thought. Of the many campaigns in that parish, theirs had capped the climax of polite uneventfulness.

Thus, M'sieu, after four weeks upon this blind trail, I found that I had only succeeded in making more convincing the guilt of Leblanc. By now I was utterly weary and disheartened. My mind, numbed by its unsuccessful strain, seemed empty of thought. It was then that, with but little more than two weeks before me, I decided to return for a few days to the lower coast. I was useless in my present condition, I told myself. If for a time I abandoned it all, the fresh salt winds might blow into my tired brain some thought that would lead to success. And so, strangely enough, having abandoned the struggle, I discovered in my defeat that which was to lead me to victory.

It began in the near-by city of Mouton, where I had gone to lay in my supplies. Entering a coffee house for the purchase of a bottle of brandy, I found behind the bar Jacques Pesson, an old acquaintance of

mine. This Pesson, a former hunter, and one famed for his talkativeness, began at once to deluge me with a flood of questions. He asked after my health, my luck, the game upon the coast, the purpose of my expedition. Then, finding that I had come from Landry, he of course proceeded to the tragedy which was the topic of the hour.

"And that sheriff of yours, that Lamar," said he finally. "He is in luck to have in his custody such a famous criminal. It will make him famous. Well, it is only just that, as luck could not come to him as a gambler, it should do so as a sheriff."

"A gambler?" I asked, for want of something better to say. "Then he played here?"

At this Pesson closed his lips suspiciously, only to open them the next moment to his irrepressible love of gossip.

"It was a private game in the private room," said he cautiously. "But I know that the matter will be safe with you, Bossu. Played, you ask? Why, he bet hundreds as we would bet a penny. I, who carried in the liquor, know."

"And he plays now?" I inquired, still half idly.

Pesson shook his head.

"Not since the Spring," he replied. "He was too unlucky. No man could have stood such losses."

At first I paid little attention to Pesson's tale. If Lamar chose to gamble in Mouton, that was his business. Later, however, as I returned to Landry, I came to see how this business might very well be my own.

 LAMAR was poor. He had only his salary, the saving of which for years would not have enabled him to bet hundreds for any length of time. But there was the large amount of money belonging to the parish which passed through the Sheriff's hands. Suppose Lamar had gambled with this money? Suppose his accounts were hopelessly short? Suppose he was striving to repay what he had lost?

In that event his campaign for reelection had not been merely a desire to retain his office. It had been a desperate struggle to save his good name. And it was conceded by all that, had he lived, Domain would have been victorious.

That night I did not sleep upon my boat

as I had intended. Instead, surrounded by my forgotten stores, I sat within my hut and carefully considered this discovery. All along I had sought a motive for this murder, and now, by accident, I had found one. Now I could go ahead. Now, piece by piece, I could refute the evidence against Leblanc. *Bien!* I would begin with the hardest, the most unexplainable bit—the last words of Domain.

"Leblanc," he had said and, as I spoke the name, it was as if I were brought up short against a blank wall. No, there could be no mistake. Norres had sworn so. The name, though whispered, had been terribly distinct.

"Leblanc, Leblanc," I repeated hopelessly, going back and reciting the other words of Domain. And then, as I did so, a sudden light burst upon me. I gasped. I denounced myself as a fool. I marveled that I had not seen it from the first.

Why should the dying man answer a question as to his injury? Why should he explain that which was only too apparent? No, Domain had not done so. He had reserved his final breath for the all-important second question.

He had not said, "*C'est la mort*—it is death," as Norres had understood him to. He had said instead, "*C'est Lamar*—it is Lamar!" And he had been about to add, "Leblanc is innocent" when he expired.

All that night I thought and planned in a fever of excitement. I had found my trail, I had traveled far upon it, but there were still many obstacles before me. And greatest of them all was the explanation of Domain's wound, of his terrible wound, which was beyond the caliber of any weapon in all the country save only the great gun of Leblanc.

III

 IN THE days that followed I built up my theory of Lamar's guilt into something very much like a certainty. Questioning that the Sheriff had lost even greater sums than Pesson had told of. Then, going back to Landry, I sought to learn in detail Lamar's movements upon the day of the murder. This proved to be a harder task but, by haunting the Sheriff's door with several strings of low-priced game, I finally learned from his housekeeper all that I wished to know.

Immediately after dinner, upon the day of Domain's death, Lamar had set forth with his breech-loader to hunt in the woods. He had returned that afternoon barely in time to receive the first reports of the crime.

By now, M'sieu, I was sure. It remained only for me to account for the size and depth of Domain's wound. But there was a question without whose answer all that I had learned was worthless. What if I proved that Lamar had gambled with the parish money, that there was ample motive for his murder of Domain? The Sheriff had but to point from that terrible hole to his little breech-loader, and all of my fine-spun theories would be dissolved into thin air.

Yes, there was a question and, struggle with it as I might, the result was ever the same. It was impossible, I told myself, that Lamar could have used Leblanc's gun without the hunter's knowing of it. Therefore, as Lamar had set forth with the breech-loader, the breech-loader must have been used in firing the fatal shot. But how?

In the end, and with but two more days remaining to me, I hit upon a final, desperate plan. Since Lamar alone knew the secret of that shot, then must Lamar himself be made to explain it. To accomplish this explanation I must discover one certain bit of evidence.

Now, even with my complete ignorance of breech-loaders, M'sieu, I knew that, to make such a wound, to keep his charge from scattering, Lamar must first have made some unusual preparation. If this preparation applied to the gun itself, then was my bit of evidence hopelessly beyond me. If, however, it applied to the charge, I still might have a chance. True, in those early days hunters ever kept their exploded shells for the purpose of reloading them, but perhaps through his preparations Lamar had rendered this particular shell beyond further usefulness, and had therefore cast it away.

It was the vaguest shred of a hope, and I had but two days in which to search the half mile strip of forest through which Lamar had escaped, yet I did not despair. What mattered it, even, that the covering of this strip must prove beyond my own poor powers? Could I not now depend upon the help of my companion?

Among the possessions in my hut was an

empty, waterproof shell that had been given me by one of my patrons. In it I had carried my matches. Taking it now from its shelf, I called my little dog to my side.

"See, Vixen?" said I.

Then, casting the shell outside, I commanded her to fetch, and the lesson began.

Ah, M'sieu, but that was a tedious matter. With but the forty-eight hours before me, it required the patience of a Job. To the little dog, trained for the retrieving of woodcock, it meant an entire reversal of education. Yet I persevered until, at midday, I had taught her regularly to fetch the shell.

Then began the real struggle, for, if Vixen were to return to me the shell of Lamar, my own shell must not be in a position to interfere with her. Therefore I must only pretend to throw my shell. I must let her hunt for it in vain, and, having finally allowed her to find it, I must reward her accordingly.

Three times before dark I permitted Vixen to find the shell. Three times I rewarded her to the best of my ability. Then, with the little dog beside me, I lay down to await the coming of day.

My search, which began at sunrise, proved even a more heart-breaking affair than the lessons of the day before. All through the short, precious hours of daylight I quartered that long half mile of forest. I threw my imaginary shell, I followed Vixen's wavering trail through the forest, and always the little dog crept back to me with the faltering step of defeat. I whipped her, I pled with her, I sent her through each patch of brush, each clump of grass, each drift of leaves, but all to no avail.

And then as, defeated and hopeless, I was returning at sunset, Vixen found it. It was strange, M'sieu; it was awesome. It was almost like some act of Divine justice. For some time I had ceased to pretend throwing my shell. For some time Vixen had limped quietly along beside me. Then, suddenly and without warning, the little dog sprang out to one side of the path. Straight as a bullet to its mark she sped toward the roots of a live oak, and, even before she seized it, I saw the shell where it lay in plain sight amid the litter of leaves and twigs.

It was a short, a mutilated shell, and the little wire upon its base marked it as belonging to the pin-fire of Lamar. An in-

stant I gazed at its shorn end, and then, with a shout of triumph, if not of understanding, I set off at full speed toward my hut.

Five minutes later I was in the saddle and upon my way to Mouton. I had won, perhaps, but only at the last moment. Indeed, as I galloped past the jail, there fell athwart me for an instant the shadow of the gallows that had been built for Leblanc.



AT MOUTON Sheriff Hebert listened to my story with ever increasing uncertainty.

"That may all sound very plausible, my friend," said he, when I had finished, "but such things must be first looked into. I can not arrest a man for murder offhand, especially such a man as Lamar. When I have tested your story, when I have made sure of it, it will, perhaps, be a different matter."

"And in the meantime an innocent man will be executed," I reminded him. "After to-morrow Leblanc will be beyond human aid."

"Then what would you have me do?" cried Hebert.

"This," said I; and I outlined my plan of the day before.

"It is a risk," said Hebert doubtfully, when he had considered it. "It is almost madness. Even if Lamar is guilty, I might fail. And who then will shoulder the blame?"

"You will not fail, M'sieu," I assured him. "I myself might do so, but not you, who represent the law. As for the blame, if blame there is, I will bear it all. I will be with you in person. I will even go with you as your prisoner. Come, M'sieu, you can not ask more."

Of the scene which took place later at Landry, I have a memory that will never fade. Arriving late, despite our desperate riding, we went at once to the Sheriff's house, where we were fortunate enough to find Lamar still up and in his office. He looked very old and tired, did Lamar, and in his fat, red face there were lines that had not been there a month before.

Explaining that I had committed a crime within his jurisdiction, and that in the morning he would take me to Mouton, Hebert asked that I might be allowed to spend the night in the Landry jail. Then, when

Lamar had assented, the two officers began a discussion of the coming execution, until finally there fell between them a pause.

The moment had arrived. In the quiet Hebert reached down a hand to his vest pocket. Breathlessly I watched him as he drew forth the shorn pin-fire shell and held it out upon his palm. And then, as Lamar shrank back in sudden terror, Hebert's accusation rang out with a swiftness, a sharpness that could not be denied.

"Lamar," he demanded, "why did you kill Davide Domain?"

Ah, M'sieu, it was as I had hoped, as I had expected! In the horror, the unexpectedness of that moment, the soul of Lamar was stripped bare. Trembling, ashen, he shrank back farther still, his eyes fairly starting from his head.

"I had to, I had to," he panted. "It was Domain or myself."

And then, with a sudden gasp of realization, he cried:

"*Dieu*, Hebert! What have I said?"

But I waited for no more. Before even Hebert had a chance to reply, I was upon my way to redeem my promise to the son of old Pepin Leblanc.



SO THAT is all, M'sieu. Before he died, Lamar made a full confession of his crime. As for his secret mode of shooting—which he had learned from a sportsman at Mouton—it was the now well known trick of cutting the shell below the shot which our hunters employ when, armed only for birds, they come upon a bear or a deer at close range. Thus, for a short distance, is the shot kept from scattering, the charge striking its mark with all of the force and compactness of a bullet.

The murder, strangely enough, had been wholly unpremeditated. Hopelessly involved, and facing certain defeat in the coming election, Lamar had been upon the point of destroying himself. To this end he had repaired with his breech-loader to the woods, having first cut a shell, that he might make a clean job of it.

Later, when, at the point of trees, he had caught sight of Domain upon the parish

road, all of the terror, the shame, the despair of his position had merged into fierce, blinding hatred against his adversary. Domain would win; Domain would expose him. Were it not for this man he might, in time, pay back what he had lost. And why should Domain wish to deprive him of his office? The planter was rich; the salary would be to him but a trifle.

Suddenly, in the fury of the moment, Lamar had come upon a dreadful resolve. At all events, there was one phase of the difficulty that could be definitely settled. One shot from the gun in his hand, and his office would be uncontested. Afterward, if the crime were fastened upon him, he had only to complete his interrupted task.

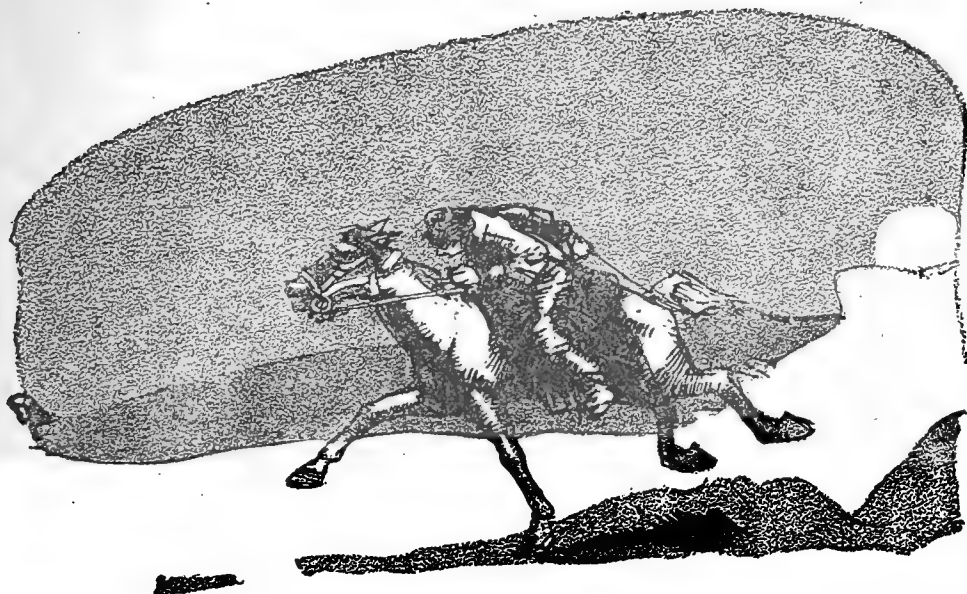
Thus, half mad with rage, Lamar had called Domain to him, and had shot the planter, at close range, from behind a tree. Also he had aimed deliberately at the stomach that the wound might prove fatal beyond doubt. Afterward, awakening to a full realization of his deed, he had fled in horror, extracting his telltale shell as he ran.

The clean passage of the shot, the arrival of Leblanc, the death of Domain at the moment of exposure, all of these things had been only a series of strange and unexpected incidents in the Sheriff's favor. Indeed, it seemed that Fate had at last turned a smiling face upon Lamar. With his crime fastened upon and proven against another from the very first, he had thought his position to be absolutely secure.

As for Leblanc, he married his pretty Fortune in due course, and settled down to a life of industry and sobriety. His was a terrible lesson, yet it served him well. Shaken to the very foundations of his being, he was enabled to rebuild his life upon a better, wiser plan.

And so, M'sieu, through the darkness, the hopelessness of this, the first of my investigations, I came to find a great and lasting trust in my fellow man. Perhaps, had I not followed the trail of that secret shot, I would now be like those who, when they search, seek only for guilt. As it is I am disappointed only when I fail to reach the goal of innocence.





The IMPULSIVENESS OF BLACK DOUGLAS

by **Ralph Delamere Keefer**
Late of the Royal Northwest Mounted — and
Stephen Chalmers

THAT he had acted impulsively, Black Douglas himself would have been the last to deny. But it had all appeared so easy. The mistake he made was to forget the existence of the Northwest Mounted Police and that the Government was still at Ottawa.

This is how it was:

THE barroom of the "Last Chance" at Dawson was deserted, save for a somnolent inebriate in a chair by the stove. In the dance hall that opened off the bar, the presiding deity of the roulette wheel checked the ineffective gyrations of his little ivory ball and glanced at the clock

overhead. It was one hour after midnight.

"Well," said the deity with a delicately veiled yawn, "if you ain't going to roll any more I guess we'll shut up."

Black Douglas arose heavily from his chair and muttered something profane.

"I'm cleaned out," said he. "I swear there ain't a wheel in Dawson hain't been fixed."

The dealer smiled as he stacked his winnings. It was the plaint of the "busted shoestring." He failed to notice the sudden narrowing of his late client's eyes as they sized up the evening's plunder, or the swift glance into the bar. The inebriate was snoring gently.

"Hold on a minute!" said Black Douglas, reaching under his left armpit. "I got somethin' left to stake against your whole blame pile."

Raising his eyes with languid interest, the deity of the roulette wheel suddenly stiffened into an attitude of pained surprise. He found himself gazing down the barrel of a .45.

"You win," said the dealer bitterly, as Black Douglas induced him to rise and back up against the wall.

With that impulsiveness which was his besetting vice as well as virtue, Black Douglas coolly raked in the proceeds of his *coup*, retreated with royal ceremony toward the doorway, and leaped through with the agility of a lion tamer leaving a cage.

But he had quite overlooked the police. When a corporal's guard hammered on the door of his modest abode half an hour later, demanding entrance in the Queen's name, Douglas realized that his impulsiveness had led him into a grave error of judgment. He attempted to repair it by dropping out of the back window.

Thus he fell into the waiting arms of one Forty-Mile Grainger, Constable, R. N. W. M. P., who had been stationed at that very window as a reception committee for Black Douglas. The latter found himself handcuffed so quickly that he looked his captor all over with undisguised admiration and said—

"Say! You must be a patent lock!"

Grainger laughed.

"Sorry, old chap," said he. "You're some swift yourself."

And somehow they respected one another from that moment.



THE trial of Black Douglas was short and conclusive. The sentence was ten years. Black was taken to the Yukon Guardroom, where there followed for him a cycle of dreary days of back-breaking labor under the supervision of armed escorts. The days were accompanied by the ceaseless whine of a circular saw and the nights were filled with visions of a monster woodpile upon which Black Douglas was forced to cast block after block, until the whole business toppled over and crushed him. Then he would be awakened by low-voiced words of command, the jingling of keys, the clattering of padlocks, and a lantern flash in his eyes as

"Visiting Rounds" peered in at him through the bars, as at some wild beast caged.

Truly, it was a cheerful existence into which Black Douglas's impulsive nature had led him!

Finally, one morning, he was haled forth from his cell, decked out in a close-fitting fatigue uniform from which the buttons had been cut, and which hid the impressionistic effect of the prison stripes beneath it. He was curtly informed by the Provost Sergeant that he was to be sent out to Wood Mountain Penitentiary under escort, there to complete the ten years of imprisonment just begun.

Black Douglas was filled with joy at the prospect. Any change was welcome, and moreover on a journey of nearly three thousand miles there must occur some chance of escape. But when he saw his escort his hope was momentarily dashed. It was Forty-Mile Grainger.

"Hullo, Douglas," said Forty-Mile with a good-natured grin, which the prisoner could not help returning, somehow.

"So there you are!" said Black Douglas, adding frankly, "I'm going to beat you if I can."

"That's a fair statement," said Grainger, twinkling. "It'll make things interesting on the trip. Let's start."



SO FORTY-MILE GRAINGER took Black Douglas aboard the steamer at Dawson, put a cigar in his prisoner's mouth, lit it for him, shoved him into his stateroom and locked the door from the inside. During the trip up the river to White Horse, Grainger spent hours with Black Douglas in the cabin, smoking with him and exchanging yarns. They got to know one another very well, and whatever may have been lurking in the prisoner's mind and heart, Forty-Mile's liking for Black Douglas grew.

He was not a bad man, Grainger could see that—just impulsive, as Douglas explained himself.

"A thing like robbing a roulette man's all right," said Black Douglas. "It's bein' caught on a detail that proves a man a fool. Then if I'd only known it was you that was outside that there window, I'd 'a' tried the front door. But I'll get you yet!"

"You're on," said Grainger, laughing.

At White Horse they transferred to the train for Skagway. The prisoner and

Forty-Mile faced one another, Black Douglas with his hands folded in his lap and his coat sleeves pulled down to hide his handcuffs. As the train entered upon American soil at White Pass, Douglas fell into a brooding silence. Ever and anon he glanced narrowly at Forty-Mile Grainger. He was turning over in his mind ways and means and possibilities of escape. At last Grainger looked up at him good-humoredly, and said:

"Well? Won't any of them work, old man?"

"Nary a one!" said Black Douglas, with a half sigh.

"What was the last one?"

"I was wondering," said the prisoner slowly, "if it would be possible to jam you against the back of the seat and choke you with the connecting links of these here bracelets."

"It might work," said Grainger thoughtfully. "But after that——? You'd stand a pretty poor chance of getting away with the cuffs still on you and that fancy costume."

"That was just the snag I hit on. You're sure swift on the uptake, Grainger."

After Skagway they had another four days on shipboard out to Vancouver. When Grainger was not with him, Black Douglas sat in the locked-in stateroom, gazing through the porthole over the gray seas with only an occasional iceberg to break the monotony of them. And ever before him, more dreary than the prospect beyond the porthole, was an interminable, granite-hued vista of years—ten years enlivened by the click of shackles.

What would he be like in ten years, this great piece of animal manhood that feared neither man nor devil? A bent, calloused, prematurely aged man, with all the good—and there was much of it in him still—crushed out, and cringing to every self-assertive personality. He had seen ex-convicts before and pitied them for the brand they bore, the brand that would be on him too, stamped in by pitiless servitude.

And so they came to Vancouver, and Chance had thrown nothing in the path of Black Douglas. Forty-Mile Grainger transferred himself and his prisoner to a train again, and then began the tedious journey across the Rockies to Wood Mountain Penitentiary.

Time hung heavy on their hands. They

had left the mountains and were whirling over the prairie land, which was flat as a disk from horizon to horizon. Save for Grainger and his prisoner the car was empty, it being a colonist "sleeper" and still retaining a suggestion of traveled Duk-hobortsi and other colonists of the incoming trip. Grainger and Douglas were smoking long, black cigars as a corrective to the atmosphere when Forty-Mile leaned forward and looked into Black Douglas's eyes.

"Douglas," said he, quietly, "if I took these handcuffs off, would you pass your word not to try an escape?"

"No!" said Douglas shortly.

"Too bad," said Grainger, flicking the ash from the stogie. "I don't see any reason why we shouldn't play penny ante or—— However!"

They both lapsed into silence. At last Black Douglas sat up and held out his manacled wrists.

"I go you," said he simply.

Grainger felt in his pocket for the key of the handcuffs, the while his gray eyes looked Black Douglas through and through.

"If I know anything about human nature, generally and individually," said he, "I should say this much for you, Douglas; that, with all your faults, you wouldn't pass your word and break it."

"No, I wouldn't!" said the Black, adding almost fiercely: "And you know it—worse luck!"

Click! The handcuffs fell from Black Douglas's wrists. For a half minute the prisoner stretched his arms and a thrill shot through him as he felt the muscles ripple under his coat sleeves. For a moment he weighed the matter of breaking his word. Then he became aware that Grainger was regarding him with a faint smile. Douglas suddenly averted his eyes.

"You don't blame a fellow, do you?" said he uncomfortably.

"Most natural thing in the world," said Grainger softly. "Now, if you've got over that feeling, let's kill time."

He arose and went into the next car, returning presently with a pack of cards. Black Douglas snarled at him.

"You weren't the least scared to leave me sittin' here?" said he.

"No, sir," said Forty-Mile, letting down the little table board whereon travelers eat and play cards. "High deals."

They played cards for four hours. Then

Grainger began to yawn, but as host he was too polite to suggest cessation of the game. At last Black Douglas threw down his cards and said—

"Aw, let's chuck it."

Grainger gathered up the cards, hooked up the board and went forward to return the pack to the conductor who owned it. When he came back Black Douglas was grinding his teeth. He shoved out his wrists and snarled:

"Here, put 'em back again—quick! If I'd seen my chance all this time we been playin' I couldn't ha' took it."

The bracelets were snapped on again, and the two men watched the dusk steal over the monotonous prairie as the train sped eastward.



THEN Chance, which had ignored Black Douglas so long, made a sudden, woman-like surrender. It had fallen quite dark when there sounded a frantic succession of whistle shrieks and the ripping jar of brakes. Next moment the front end of the car rose up like an aeroplane taking flight until it seemed about to topple backward like an over-bucking broncho. It was Black Douglas, facing forward, who noticed this phenomenon just before he lost consciousness. Grainger's sensations are not recorded, save that he made a dive for his prisoner and his head collided with something.

When Black Douglas came to he found himself in a cavern of shattered beams and twisted framework. A red glow illumined the scene. Save for a stiff neck the prisoner discovered himself unhurt. The back of his seat had propped the wreckage over him as he lay on the floor.

He sat up and peered around. Out in what had once been the aisle was Forty-Mile Grainger, a crumpled heap of red, half hidden by a mass of *débris*.

After the first moment of stunned inactivity, Douglas crawled toward his escort and examined him. There was a cut on Grainger's left temple. He might be dying, but he was not yet dead. Douglas, realizing that his chance had come, decided that it was no time for sentiment. He had seen the constable dive for his prisoner when the smash came. Douglas argued upon this circumstance that he, personally, had no cause to be considerate of the constable. It was all in the game.

In a sudden intoxication of desire for liberty the blood rushed to his head. In a kind of fury he lifted his manacled fists over Grainger's head, meaning in a subconscious kind of way to make sure of no further interference from the law. Even if he did not escape—there had been an accident and Grainger's head had been stove in.

But even as he knelt by the unconscious man, his iron-linked wrists raised high, Black Douglas's old impulse, which could be as kindly as brutal, stayed him.

He gave a grunt of disgust, whether at the act he had contemplated or his failure to execute it he never could tell. He contented himself by rolling Grainger over on his back and extracting the key of the handcuffs from the pocket where he had seen Forty-Mile put it.

Next minute Black Douglas was a free man.

Leaving the still form in the ruins, Black Douglas began an investigation. The luck was still with him. He found a portion of the side of the car that had fallen outward like a conjurer's box. Swiftly he wormed his way out of the maze into the open air.

There was an excited throng gathered around the wreck, shouting and heaving and giving directions. The engine was groaning and hissing like a dying dragon, and one of the forward cars was aflame, the red radiance of the blaze lighting up the prairie for hundreds of yards. It also showed that quite a number of men, cowboys and others, had assembled at the scene of the wreck, which indicated that Black Douglas must have been unconscious for some time.

In the confusion no one paid the least attention to the shabby figure in the buttonless fatigue uniform. Douglas mingled with the throng without detection and presently edged to where a group of cow ponies nosed together, all saddled and bridled.

Quietly Black Douglas selected a rangy-looking sorrel and began stroking its neck, the while he shot furtive glances around to see if he was observed. The inquisitive, excited crowd all had their backs toward him. Next moment Black Douglas jerked the reins over the sorrel's head, swung into the saddle and slipped away at a gentle lope into the comparative darkness of the prairie.

His departure passed unnoticed. But as he rode southward—for the border was

there, not more than one hundred miles away—he passed other riders traveling at high speed northward, evidently keen to see the wreck.

"How many killed?" yelled one rider.

"Scores!" Black Douglas yelled. "I'm riding for sawbones!"

"Eh?" he heard the rider ejaculate, as if mortally surprised at something. But the escaped convict did not stop to ask him about it.

From a lope he had urged the sorrel into a wild gallop. The taste of freedom was on his lips. As he shot through the night he swayed in his saddle in keen enjoyment of the motion and the sense of killing distances between himself and the law. A good horse, his hands free and the border before him—what better chance could he have? True, his costume was a bit off color, but it was infinitely better than the stripes it concealed.

He stood up in his stirrups and whooped almost hysterically, at the same time slapping the horse's flanks with his cap. He was free! Free! And the sorrel's hoofs beat out the song of the open road.

Little white clouds drifted across the starry canopy and the gophers peered out of their holes to see what manner of man thus thundered over their underground houses and disturbed their sleep. Free! Wood Mountain Penitentiary seemed a million miles away, and he was more than two thousand miles from that "Last Chance" gambling-parlor where his impulsiveness had led him into error. Who had ever heard of Black Douglas in *these* parts?



TWO hours later a ragged frieze of houses appeared on the skyline, standing out black against the stars. Black Douglas sharply reined in the sorrel. He dared not pass this first night in civilization. He turned the horse's head a little to the westward and, forging ahead, passed the outskirts of the settlement. For another hour he rode hard, then reined in again.

Ahead of him he perceived a weather-beaten shack, which seemed as if it had been dumped at random on the prairie. A single light gleamed in a small window.

"I'll chance it!" muttered Black Douglas, and he rode forward.

His knock at the shack door was answered by a haggard woman bearing a lighted lamp.

She scrutinized her nocturnal visitor with an eye half distrustful, half fearful.

"Excuse me, ma'am," said Black Douglas, obtruding a foot through the partly opened door. "Could you give me a shake-down for the night? I got no money with me, but you can have my hoss till I settle up."

The woman backed away from the door, leaving the entrance free to Douglas. Obviously she was beside herself with fear, but it was not fear for herself, but rather for some one or something that she was trying to shield.

"I suppose—I might," said she slowly. "But I have not much to offer."

There was a suggestion of northern Europe in her accent.

"My man, he has gone east on a cattle train, so that I am alone with my baby. So you do not waken her up, I give you supper and a bed; yes?"

Black Douglas followed his hostess into the kitchen, where she set before him a rough but a solid meal, which he attacked ravenously.

"Lived here long?" he asked, by way of making conversation.

"It is now three years since we have come here," the woman replied in her careful English, twisting her coarse apron nervously. "My husband and I, we are Sven—Svedish. He was once instructor at a gymnasium in Stockholm."

"Oh, sort of acrobat, eh?" said Black Douglas vaguely. He was really thinking that this woman and her husband might be kin of his, in the class of the hunted.

"No, no! Not that a-tall!" cried the woman, flushing. "The gymnasium, it is what you call 'high school.' My man, he is a scholar."

"Hmmp!" grunted Black Douglas, wiping his mouth. "Queer place, this, for a scholar."

The woman said nothing to this ill advised remark. When Douglas had finished eating she took the lamp and led the way into an adjoining room.

"Here is where you sleep," she said in her tired voice. "My baby and I are above. Please do not make a noise, for my baby is sick."

She left the lamp, went out and closed the door after her. Without undressing Black Douglas flung himself on the camp bed which, with a wooden box upon which

the woman had set the lamp, comprised the only furnishing of the room. In spite of his aching limbs he was soon fast asleep.

The strain and excitement of the day, however, invaded his dreams and caused kaleidoscopic nightmares wherein he was pursued over thousands of miles by hordes of mounted wardens and police. Chief among the latter was Constable Forty-Mile Grainger as Douglas had last seen him, with blood trickling from a wound in his head. Then a figure arose and gripped him from behind—a high-school instructor clad in the spangled tights of an acrobat.

II

 BLACK DOUGLAS awoke, sweating with terror, and became aware that something unusual was happening outside.

A dull, lurid glow penetrated the window of his room. Some one was hammering loudly on the door of the shack. Half awake, he stumbled out of bed and answered the summons. Then he started back with a snarl. He was caught! The man in the doorway wore a red tunic. There was a bandage around his head. It was Forty-Mile Grainger!

"H'lo, Douglas," said he shortly, as he stepped inside. "You will consider yourself rearrested. But, in the meantime, I can't hold you. The prairie's afire—caught from the train. It's driving straight this way. Anybody live here?"

"A woman and—and a kid," said Douglas, somewhat dazed at the sudden new turn of the situation.

"Get the woman to help if she's fit," Grainger whispered. "Get pails of water and a broom—quick. You've got to do your level best to head off that fire toward the river, or the woman and the kid and the whole shebang will go up in smoke. I've got a horse outside and 'll ride for help to the nearest ranch or police barracks."

Without another word Forty-Mile Grainger was through the doorway and in the saddle again. Black Douglas stood in the middle of the room and listened to the beat of galloping hoofs dying away into the distance. Then his face lit up and he heaved a sigh of relief. Presently he grinned.

"That bump on the head must 'a' knocked him silly!" he muttered. "Consider myself rearrested! Ginger, that's a

good one! And he rides off and leaves me neither on parole nor handcuffed nor nothin' else. Oh, yes! I'll be here when he comes back! I'll have a bucket in one hand and a broom in the other, fightin' fire by the sweat of my honest brow! And then I'll go to Wood Mountain like a nice obedient little boy! *Gee—whiz!*"

A hand clutched at his arm. Turning with a start, he faced the woman, an untidy specter in a gray flannel dressing-gown with scanty tow-colored hair straggling about her pallid face.

"What is it?" she whispered tensely. "What is it that policeman want? My man he is not here. I tell you he go east——"

"He didn't want your man," said Douglas, bluntly. "See here!"

He led her to the window where she could see the advance guard of red-tinged smoke extending across the prairie for miles to left and right.

"My baby!" gasped the woman. "My baby will be burned up!"

"Aw, forget it!" growled Black Douglas. "There ain't no call to make a fuss. They're going to send men to put it out. Sorry I can't stop to help you. I—I got an engagement. All you got to do is see it don't jump your fireguard."

"But there are—there have been plowed no fireguards!" cried the woman, shaking like a leaf.

"What's that?" said Black Douglas incredulously. "*No fireguard!*"

"No," wailed the woman. "My man he go east in the Spring and I did not—I was not able—— Oh, my baby! my baby!" she ended, sinking down on her knees and rocking to and fro in abject despair.

Black Douglas burst out in a torrent of profanity, simply to down his impulses. But he was thinking rapidly. The horse that he had borrowed was likely hereafter to be an embarrassment when the report of its loss had been circulated. He himself could escape quite easily without it, whereas carrying a woman and child——

"Here," said he to the cowering woman, "the best thing you can do is hit the trail as quick as you know how, you and the kid. My horse is in the barn——"

"But my baby is sick!" sobbed the woman. "The doctor say if she is moved she will die. Please do not leave me. My man, he will thank you——"

"Oh, cuss your man!" interrupted Black Douglas in exasperation.

Yet against every instinct of the law of self-preservation, Black Douglas's impulses were rampant. Even for him, it seemed too cold-blooded to leave this helpless creature and her more than helpless offspring to perish in the flames without some effort to save her.

On the other hand, his own safety lay in immediate flight, for Forty-Mile Grainger might return at any minute. Even if he avoided Grainger, if he met anybody else his fatigue uniform and the stripes that it covered would betray him. He must go—now, before daylight. He must slip away into the black shadows leeward of the prairie fire and find a hiding-place until the darkness of the next night would enable him to push forward to the border, undetected. And what had this woman or her confounded "man" ever done for him that he should sacrifice ten years of liberty in their service?

He tore himself roughly from the woman's detaining grasp and made for the door.

"I can't help you," he said brusquely. "The police are after me, and I got to look out for myself. I——"

A little cry from the room above interrupted him. Black Douglas drew a sharp breath, Heaven knows what dormant thing aroused in him by the sound. The woman was quick to notice the effect upon him. She became suddenly silent, merely gazing at the escaped convict with mute appeal.

Black Douglas got one glimpse of her stricken white face and turned away, inwardly cursing himself for an utter fool. Again came the little cry from the loft, and at that Black Douglas burst out in a stream of language that would have been utterly vile but for what prompted it.

"Go and fill your pails," he ordered harshly. "Hurry up now! I'll help you out, but I can't stay long, mind! I—I got an engagement."



HALF an hour later, when a four-horse ranch team galloped up, crowded with men and with Constable Forty-Mile Grainger riding a blown horse alongside, they were surprised to find their work already done and an unconscious man in a badly scorched fatigue suit, one hand grasping the charred remains of a broom, lying with his head supported in the

lap of a smoke-begrimed, red-eyed woman.

A thin veil of smoke hung in the air, but the shack stood unharmed on the blackened prairie. At a glance the scene told its own story of a single-handed fight against the fire fiend and how Black Douglas had redeemed himself.

"See you've headed it off!" cried the ranch foreman, jumping from the wagon. "What's the matter with your man? Suffocation?"

"Yes," said the woman, replying to the foreman, but with her eyes fixed defiantly upon Forty-Mile Grainger. "He swallow too much smoke."

"Here, let me at him," said the big foreman with rough kindness. "We'll have him right in a brace of shakes. Here! What the blazes! As I'm a sinner, if it ain't a convict!"

He had torn open the fatigue jacket to give Douglas air and discovered the prison stripes beneath.

"No!" said the woman, fiercely. "It is my man. He come back last night from the east."

"Then where did he get them duds?" asked the foreman, willing but unable to believe the woman's statement.

"My man," the woman lied bravely, "he was once instructor in a gymnasium of Stockholm. That suit is—what you call it?—the uniform of his gymnasium."

And again she glared defiantly at the constable in the red tunic. The foreman turned away shaking his head. Grainger drew him aside and whispered something, whereat the ranchman turned to his men.

"Pile in, boys. There's nothin' to do, and this ain't none of our funeral."

As the wagon rattled away, Grainger approached the prostrate convict. The woman drew Douglas's head closer to her.

"What are you going to do?" she hissed, eying the constable like a tigress.

"I'm going to put that plucky devil to bed and nurse him," said he, paying no attention to the woman, but lifting Black Douglas in his arms and carrying him toward the shack.



FOUR days later Black Douglas was as well as ever he had been. Grainger had pulled him through.

"Well," said the convict, "I suppose it's the mittens again?"

"Not yet," said Grainger. "There's something owing to you—exactly half an

hour. Are you feeling well enough to travel?"

"Just go round the corner for a minute and watch me," said Black Douglas with a bitter chuckle.

"Well, I'll saddle the horses. I'll expect you to stay here till I come back. I mean that!" said he, pointedly, fixing his gray eyes upon Douglas's face. "Can I trust you without the cuffs?"

"I'll wait," said Black Douglas. "Only remember—I'm awful impulsive."

Three minutes later Grainger brought around two horses, saddled. One was the stolen sorrel, the other a horse that Grainger had borrowed when he started on the trail of Black Douglas. The convict was waiting for him at the door of the shack.

"Mount!" said Forty-Mile shortly.

Wondering, Douglas obeyed. The moment he was astride the horse he was seized with a mad impulse to start away at full gallop. But out of the corner of his eye he noticed that Forty-Mile Grainger had a watch in one hand and a service revolver in the other.

"Black Douglas," said Grainger. "You did a fine thing the other night. I trusted you. I knew what you'd do, yet I couldn't have blamed you much if you'd chosen liberty as against ten years at Wood Mountain. You gave half an hour of your time to that woman and her kid when you could have been hiking for the border. I owe you that half hour and I'm going to give it to you."

"Now, listen. The border is only forty miles south. At the word 'go,' you can start. But understand that thirty minutes later—to the very second—I'm after you. Are you ready?"

"You're on," said Black Douglas, gathering up his reins and hitching himself in the saddle.

"Then—go!"

The word fell from Grainger's lips like a pistol shot, and like a ball from a gun muzzle went Black Douglas and the sorrel. Forty-Mile stood by the saddled horse before the shack, watching the sorrel and its rider until both were but a bobbing blot upon the blackened prairie.

He watched until the sorrel and its rider were but a speck on the horizon. Then Forty-Mile Grainger climbed into his saddle

and sat like an equestrian statue, watching the passage of the minutes in the watch that he held in his left hand.

Behind him, in the doorway of the shack, sat the Swedish woman rocking her sick baby, with her eyes looking toward the east.

Suddenly Grainger snapped the cover of his watch, slipped it into his pocket and touched the flanks of his mount with his heels. The horse broke into a long lope and headed across the blackened prairie toward the point where Black Douglas had merged into the horizon.

And the long lope continued for four hours without a break.



AT THE end of that time, and when the American border was but twelve miles away, Grainger, cantering easily over a rising on the prairie, sighted his quarry.

It was a strange picture that he saw. The knoll descended in a long slope. At the foot of it lay the carcass of a horse, and idly reclining beside it was a man, reflectively chewing a straw. It was Black Douglas.

He did not stir until Grainger drew up beside him. Then he lazily got up and said:

"I was just figuring whether I mightn't have made the rest on foot. But you were closer'n even I thought."

"Too bad, old man," said Grainger. "But—" with a glance at the sorrel, which had been ridden to death, "I expected you'd do that very thing. You could have made it if—"

"If I hadn't been so impulsive," said Douglas, ruefully regarding his late mount.

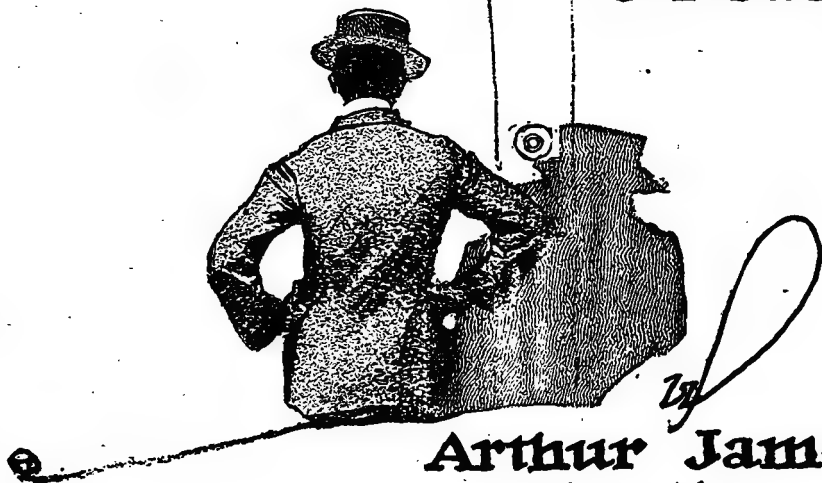
"Well," said Grainger presently. "I don't see any call for the darbies—yet. You can march ahead of me. It's tough luck, of course, and you're not a bad sort, old man; but I've got to do my duty. But there's one thing I can promise you."

"Smallest contributions thankfully received," said Black Douglas with bitter humor.

"It's this," said Forty-Mile. "I've got to make a report on all this. I may be hauled over the coals for my part in it, but I'm offering any money you'll be pardoned within six months."

And it came to pass even as Forty-Mile Grainger had said.

THAT HAHNHEIMER STORY



Arthur James
Pegler

THE elevator had landed young Singleton in a little receiving-pen, not unlike a sheep chute, the wooden walls of which extended half way to the ceiling. Facing him was a door with a ground glass upper panel, upon which was inscribed the laconic admonition—

KEEP OUT

Beyond the flimsy little coop there arose a din comparable to that associated in the ordinary mind with a boiler riveting job under a half dozen vituperative gang bosses.

‘Who d’ja want?’

Singleton observed, standing in the half opened door, a wizen-faced youth of truculent air and pale, soiled visage, with a cast in his off eye that gave him a singularly saturnine expression.

‘Say, you, who d’ja want?’ repeated the youth in an exasperated tone. Through the doorway, Singleton saw coatless men rushing here and there, apparently in panic.

‘What place is this?’ shouted Singleton, at last. One needs must adapt one’s self to circumstances. So Singleton shouted.

‘Ev’n’n Nation,’ shrieked the crosseyed

youth, in a frenzy of impatience. ‘Who d’ja want? Who d’ja want? Cough it up!’

‘Jumping Moses!’ ejaculated young Mr. Singleton.

‘Managin’ editor,’ howled the boy in the door. ‘Gi’ me y’r monicker.’

Singleton snapped a card into the grimy paw of the impatient emissary, who fled.

Sitting on a little bench at one side of this annex to Bedlam, the visitor drew off his gloves, trying meanwhile to differentiate the sounds that emerged in endless variety and volume from behind the partition.

‘Fifty dead in C. & D. W. wreck,’ roared a voice. ‘Front page, first column, layout, diagram. Hey! Get some men out on that, Mr. Bickerdyke. Get ‘em out, get ‘em out, get ‘em out!’

‘Fifty dead—layout—diagram—gotcha, Steve—yow—w—w, Smithers!’ called another man in a singsong voice, adding in sharper tones:

‘Twenty-five minutes to the deadline. Hi, you Finklestein, come on with that new lead suicide. What d’ja think this is, a weekly?’

‘Lead gone across,’ came another voice, presumably that of Finklestein. ‘Go-o-ne across,’ he wailed.

Then this from a basso profundo:

"Jones, Taylor, Wilson, Briggs. Wake up, you cripples. First train C. & D. W. wreck Beat it!"

A rush of men, pulling on coats and jamming hats on their heads, passed Singleton *en route* to the elevator. They were hard-bitten, driven, desperate, but withal competent-looking ruffians.

Rose above the clamor another order:

"Ho-o-o! Dark room! What the—
Ho-o-o! Dark room! Why doncha answer this tube?—What? Don't argue; listen. Two men, cameras, first train C. & D. W. Dodgeville—wreck—fifty killed—you'll have to hurry. Boy! Ho, copy bo-o-o-y!"

"Glad I came," thought Singleton. "Promises new experience."



SATURDAY afternoon brought a crisis in the affairs of the evening and Sunday *Nation*. On that day, the evening paper men, after putting their own last edition to bed, were reinforced by the staff of the morning *Investigator*, published under the same ownership a few doors down the street, and thereafter, until two o'clock Sunday morning, eleven editors, twenty reporters, nine special writers, twenty-two telegraph operators, ten sporting writers, thirteen office boys and a dozen raucous-voiced copy readers vied with each other in efforts to be heard above the clamor without which it is, of course, impossible to publish a real yellow newspaper.

The man who first wrote "pandemonium reigned" had just returned from a visit to the *Nation* office on a Saturday afternoon.

"Mose won't see ya."

The cross-eyed youth communicated this laconic bit of information as he emerged with a rush and a slide from the glass-paneled door.

Singleton silently handed the youthful caricature a dollar bill.

"Wha' fur?" inquired the youth, fingering the money.

"Information," answered Singleton, suavely. "Who's Mose?"

"Managin' editor," jerked the somewhat mollified emissary. "Jumpin' Moses," he added. "You asked for him, didn't cha?"

"Righto, so I did," replied Singleton. "Hit it the first time, didn't I? Now what did Mr.—ah—Moses say, when you gave him my card?"

"Said for you to go to—— Say! Are you a friend o' his?"

"Bosom," declared Singleton. "Just like brothers."

"Well," croaked the boy, "he'll fire me if he wants to see ya. Say, you go right in. He's sittin' at the big desk over there to the left—Here, mister, this way. See him? Fat guy, sweatin' and pullin' at his front hair. That's him, mister. If he gets sore, tell him I give ya the right dope. That'll let me out, see?"



SINGLETON found himself in the local room of the *Evening Nation*.

It was a huge loft, eighty feet long by forty wide. In one corner—the one nearest the fire-escape—a little coop had been erected as a seemingly reluctant concession to the dignity supposed to hedge an editor-in-chief. At this moment the chief editor was not occupying it. On the contrary, he stood with shirtsleeves rolled above his elbows directly in front of the managing editor, to whom he was uttering contemptuous remarks concerning an exceedingly disheveled manuscript, holding the offending pages in his left hand and slapping them with his right. Singleton's boy friend informed him in an awe-stricken tone that the indignant gentleman was none other than Mr. Vest, "the greatest editor in the world."

The object of Mr. Vest's immediate displeasure was Mr. Moses Herengoetz, more or less affectionately known as "Jumping Moses," or "the Colossus of Dusty Roads."

The city editor and the assistant city editor, Messrs. Bickerdyke and Sooner, a pair of luckless wights, perpetually ground between the revolving millstones of Mr. Vest's and Mr. Herengoetz's conflicting editorial policies, occupied desks uncomfortably adjacent to that of the latter gentleman.

"Horsefly!" snapped Mr. Vest. "Horsefly!" he reiterated in a tone expressive of the limit in exasperation, rolling the offending manuscript into a ball and tossing it aside contemptuously. "That's what I say, Mr. Herengoetz—horsefly!"

With that Mr. Vest, turning on an indignant heel, entered his coop and, lighting a cigarette, puffed it furiously. Mr. Herengoetz stood for a reflective moment, pulling at his convenient forelock, his neck muscles swelling under the strain of repressed emotion. Then he turned with a shrug of his massive shoulders and emitted one awesome bellow.

"Bo-o-o-y!" he shouted. "Ho-o-o-o, bo-o-o-y!" and the spell was broken. Mr. Herengoetz, when in doubt or distress, invariably yelled, "Bo-o-o-y!" It was his method of letting off steam, of affording a vent for his pent-up feelings.

Eleven boys fell over each other in response to Mr. Herengoetz's call for help, but, although the response was prompt, Mr. Herengoetz had already forgotten what he wanted the boy for, whereupon one of the rewrite men sitting nearest to Singleton remarked that the Colossus was "running true to form." With this assurance the demoniac band resumed its clamor, while Singleton, under cover of the confusion, made his way to that side of the managing editor's desk which appeared to afford the clearest avenue of retreat in the event of emergency.

Mr. Herengoetz was leaning over his desk in an attitude typifying mental concentration. Under his left hand was a pad of copy paper and in his right was a stub of pencil. From time to time he jerked loose, crumpled and peevishly discarded pages, scrawled with such legends as:

Banker Botts Breaks Jail Bonds
Bank Cashier Botts Gets Freedom
Botts Breaks Bonds Freed by Writ

Mr. Herengoetz was writing a ribbon strip—one of those startling black lines across the top of page one, just above the red lettering, that give the evening and Sunday *Nation's* front page the exciting aspect of a man with his throat cut shrieking for help.

Having at last constructed a line that appealed to his esthetic sense, the managing editor stood up, twisted violently at his straggling forelock, and stared at Singleton with an expression in which there seemed mingled astonishment and disgust.



"GOOD afternoon," ventured Singleton.

"What is it? What is it?" cried Mr. Herengoetz, his pale, plump visage distorted in nervous irritation. "Well, what do you want?"

Coatless and collarless, his small eyes gleaming like those of an enraged rogue elephant, the Colossus did not invite confidence. His large body, heterogeneously assembled, like that of a hippopotamus, quivered visibly.

"Work," said Singleton. "I came up here looking for work, sir."

"Work?" Mr. Herengoetz repeated the word as if Singleton's use of it had been an inconceivable piece of presumption. "Work? Then why don't you hang up your coat and hat?"

Mr. Herengoetz snorted as if the question could not by any human possibility be satisfactorily answered.

"But you don't understand, sir," began Singleton. "I——"

"Don't argue," roared the managing editor. "No time for argument. Hang 'em up, hang 'em up."

In this maelstrom of humanity there appeared for the moment, for a new man on the job, no more important task than that of keeping out of other men's way, and even that demanded surprising agility.

It was now the turn of Mr. Herengoetz to appear in the rôle of critic and inquisitor. With an exclamation of rage and horror he leaped from his swivel chair, waving in his left hand a proof slip.

"Damnable!" shrieked Mr. Herengoetz. "For the love of Mike, Mr. Bickerdyke, why can't I occasionally get something written in English? What is this?"

He shook the offending proof before the face of the city editor. "I repeat, in the name of the Prophet, what is it?"

Mr. Bickerdyke, diplomatically non-committal, took the proffered slip. He examined it closely, described several circles around his chair, a curious mannerism characteristic of him, and shouted at the top of his voice:

"Finnerty! Ho-o-o, Mr. Finnerty!"

"What's eating you?" inquired one of the rewrite men, who presumed to wax familiar with the gods, being a star. Mr. Finnerty possessed a directly forceful habit of speech and a Kerry brogue.

"What's this?" demanded Mr. Bickerdyke, shaking the offending proof in turn. "It's supposed to be your new lead to the bank story and there isn't a punch in it anywhere."

"Written as ordered," snapped Finnerty, glowering. "Ask Mr. Vest; he dictated it."

"Oh," said Mr. Bickerdyke.

"Oh," echoed Mr. Herengoetz.

"Want it in Yiddish?" inquired Mr. Finnerty truculently, addressing himself to Mr. Herengoetz, but the latter treated

the suggestion with contempt and vouchsafed no reply.

Suddenly Mr. Bickerdyke was seized with an idea. The fact became evident when the city editor picked up a newspaper clipping about an inch long from his desk, and after glaring at it for a moment resumed his extraordinary *pas de seul*. Mr. Bickerdyke's little peculiarity had won for him the sobriquet of "the Whirling Dervish."

Each circle described by Mr. Bickerdyke being a little wider than the last, he gradually drew near to the spot where Singleton was standing, a fascinated spectator.

On his third lap, Mr. Bickerdyke executed a sudden flank movement and confronted the new man. In his eyes there shone the light of purpose. With a nervous gesture he poked the clipping into Singleton's hand.

"Read that!" he commanded.



SINGLETON glanced through the paragraph. It was an announcement taken from the body of a longer story that Rose Hahnheimer, reputed to be the most beautiful Jewess in America, whose fiancé, Sigmund Waldeman, had been indicted for embezzlement of \$100,000 trust funds, would not break her engagement on this account, but would marry Waldeman, irrespective of his guilt or innocence.

"D'you read it?" snapped Mr. Bickerdyke.

"Yes, sir," answered Singleton.

"See the story?" inquired the editor.

"Yes, sir."

"Get it!" ordered Mr. Bickerdyke. "Story and picture. Hike!"

Singleton stood on the street with his first yellow newspaper assignment held firmly between his right forefinger and thumb. He found himself accompanied by one of the *Nation's* staff men, a pale, blond young fellow, who had left the office on an assignment shortly prior to his own exit.

"Pancoast's my name," began this youth, introducing himself. "Singleton," he repeated as the name was given him. "Glad to know you, Singleton—we're partners in misfortune, I take it. Joined the *Nation's* staff?"

"Don't know exactly," said Singleton.

"What are you on?" inquired Mr. Pancoast.

"Hahnheimer story," Singleton confided.

"What! Mean to say they handed you

that quince? You're on a dead one. Every paper in town has had from three to five men trying to land a picture of that Rosie girl for the last two weeks! There isn't a picture of her to be had and that's all there is to it. Why, I worked on the thing three days myself and I know what I'm saying."

Pancoast's tone and manner suggested that since he had been compelled to abandon the quest, any further attempt in the same direction was the height of futility and presumption.

"Let me tell you," continued the expert. "There isn't a thing we haven't done—plumber, gasfitter, telephone collector, messenger boy, fire alarm, burglary, riot in the alley. That house the Hahnheimers live in has been frisked from cellar to garret. There isn't a picture of Rose there. Every photograph gallery in town has drawn blank. Every friend the girl ever had has been visited. Take it from me, there are just three pictures of Rose Hahnheimer in the world.

"Just three pictures," pursued Mr. Pancoast, "and I know where two of them are. Waldeman had one; no chance on earth there. Mother's got one—safe deposit vault proposition. The third one has never been located. We've dragged the town for that picture, Singleton. It isn't here."

"Still," Singleton suggested, "there's the story."

"Story your eye!" snorted Pancoast contemptuously. "Why, I can write that story in my sleep. Fealty of the beautiful Jewess maiden for a column of gush. That's all there is to the story. It isn't the story they want, son, it's the picky—the swell little brunette picky.

"And if you get that picky you're a star of the first magnitude. No, you're a whole constellation. Great Scott! They'd buy the picture this minute, postage stamp size, for \$250, spot cash. That's how badly they want it. Well, I'll have to beat it along."

As Pancoast disappeared round the corner Singleton looked at his watch. It was 4:45. He had passed the grimy portals of the *Nation* office inward bound at 3:45. It had been a lively hour.



SOME time later Singleton rang the front door bell of the brownstone Waldeman mansion in upper Michigan Avenue. A little Irish maid

admitted him. A few minutes later Waldeman appeared, a tall, olive-skinned, handsome man.

"Mr. Singleton?" he queried in a puzzled way, with a glance at the card.

"Mr. Waldeman," began Singleton, "I hope you'll pardon the intrusion. I am connected with the evening and Sunday *Nation*. I—"

Waldeman raised a long white hand in protest, smiling wearily.

"My dear Mr. Singleton," he purred, "for sheer, uncompromising effrontery commend me to the *Evening Nation* and its enterprising crew of cutthroats. Is it possible that you are unaware of the treatment I have received from the newspapers?"

Waldeman's handsome face flushed as he put the question.

"This is my first day in the *Nation* office. In fact, it is my first day in Chicago," answered Singleton.

"Felicitations," smiled Waldeman.

"Thanks," snapped Singleton. "What have they been doing to you?"

"Much that I do not care to detail," Waldeman went on. "We have been pursued, hounded by camera men through the streets, intercepted at every turn by newspaper spies. My house has been burglarized twice. The home of my fiancée has been entered three times. Attempts have been made to bribe servants in both houses. A flashlight bomb was exploded in my own doorway as my mother was leaving for the opera one night last week. She has ever since been in a state of collapse, under the care of two physicians."

Waldeman drew a long breath. Then he went on in a lower voice, almost as if he were speaking to himself:

"I owe the newspapers of this town something, but you will agree, I think, that they can not claim undue courtesy. For the reasons I have mentioned and for many others, Mr. Singleton, I now ask you to leave my house."

Singleton reached for his hat.

"I don't know much about the newspapers here," he said, "so I can't place responsibility for a condition of affairs such as you describe, but this I do know, Mr. Waldeman. I was given this assignment an hour ago and I came direct to you. I believe in direct methods. I did not come through a window, you will recall; I rang the bell."

Waldeman listened courteously.

"That is true," he agreed in his precise fashion. "I thank you for ringing the bell, of course. I am not attributing blame to you personally. In fact, to save you trouble, I'll say this. There are but three photographs of Miss Hahnheimer in the world. One of them I have. Let me assure you that it will never leave my possession. The mother of my fiancée has another. After what I have said I leave you to judge whether an appeal to her would avail you."

"The third is the property of Mrs. Lieberman, Miss Hahnheimer's married sister, whose home is an apartment at Fiftieth Street and Indiana Avenue. Now, aside from the fact that Mrs. Lieberman would certainly refuse to give up the picture, it happens that she is with her family in Michigan to remain several months and I do not know the address. Good afternoon."



SINGLETON descended the steps to the street. So this was Yellow Journalism—jimmying windows and doors, harrying aged women into their graves! But perhaps, after all, these newspaper chaps were enthusiasts to whom any means to a newspaper end were acceptable.

"All's fair in love and war," he quoted. Here were love of the game and war in the playing of it. Pancoast, for instance, evidently part human, had admitted in a half joking way several of the very things mentioned in Waldeman's indictment. And nothing was really stolen, of course. Pictures "borrowed" were probably returned in some roundabout way. At all events the business in hand was to get Rose Hahnheimer's portrait; by fair means if possible. If not—

Twenty minutes later the young art collector alighted from an Indiana Avenue car at Fiftieth Street.

The flat building in which the Liebermans lived was not pretentious. They were probably poor relations. Singleton noted that there was a light behind the window curtains of the ground floor apartment. Now, if that only turned out to be the Lieberman flat!

The outer hallway was dimly lighted. Singleton struck a match. Yes, there it was—first floor right—Jacob Lieberman. He rang the bell.

There was a brief delay and then a plump, smiling, auburn-haired young woman appeared in the doorway. Mrs. Lieberman

radiated good nature and proved to be a generous soul.

Fifteen minutes later, having completed his mission, Singleton debated with himself whether to dine before telephoning to the office. On reflection he decided to telephone first.

The man at the other end of the wire announced himself as Mr. Sooner, and added that he was the assistant city editor. Mr. Sooner, Singleton discovered, possessed the conversational graces of a saddle-galled bullwhacker. He was, it may be added, exceptionally forceful over a telephone.

"Wha' d'ja want?" demanded Mr. Sooner.

"City editor," replied Singleton suavely.

"Who're you?" snorted Sooner.

"Singleton," ultra-courteously.

"Who's he?" truculently.

"Ask Mr. Herengoetz," suggestively.

"What're ya' doin'?"

"Hahnheimer story. All cleaned up. Shall I come in?"

"Who put you on the Hahnheimer story?"

"Don't know his name—man with a bald spot on top of his head—chap with the nervous feet."

"Wait a minute."

Then, standing with his ear to the receiver, Singleton heard:

"Here's a boob says he's on the Hahnheimer story and cleaned up. Wouldn't that frost your whiskers?"

A voice: "Here, let me talk to him."

Singleton decided that the last speaker was Mr. Bickerdyke, the city editor. Then there was a new voice at the phone.

"Hello! who is this?"

"Singleton."

"This is the *Nation*, Bickerdyke talking. Are you working here?"

"I don't know. Somebody sent me out—assignment—Hahnheimer case."

"What?"

"Hahnheimer case. I'm cleaned up. I want a 'come-in' order."



THERE was a guttural exclamation from the other end of the wire. Then the questioning recommenced.

"What've you done?"

"Cleaned up, sir."

"What?"

"Cleaned up!" rather emphatically.

"Your name's Singleton, you say?"

"Yes."

"Who hired you?"

"Nobody. Managing editor told me to hang up my hat."

There was a groaning and rumbling noise from the sending end. Then Mr. Bickerdyke went on—

"Mr. Singleton, do you know what your assignment called for?"

"Yes sir; story and picture, Rose Hahnheimer. All clear, Mr. Bickerdyke."

"You've cleaned up?"

This time it was a shriek.

"Yes. Give me orders. What do you want me to do?"

There was a crashing, tearing noise at the other end of the line. It seemed that some one had fallen out of a chair. Then came this—

"Say, mean to tell me you've got that girl's picture?"

Singleton blew up. For half a minute the wire was in danger of melting. Strange to say, the city editor of the *Nation* became calmer as Singleton grew more indignant.

"Suffering cats!" howled the man at the office end. "Wait a minute."

There was a brief delay. Then came the sound of ponderous feet and an accompaniment of excited voices, all close to the telephone.

Then Mr. Herengoetz, using the dulcet tones he usually reserved for communion with Mr. Vest, the editor-in-chief, began:

"Hello! Mr. Singleton? Ah, Mr. Singleton. I am told you have obtained a portrait of Miss Hahnheimer—the beautiful Miss Hahnheimer. Am I correctly informed?"

"Y-e-e-s-s!" howled Singleton. "You are."

"Mr. Singleton, are you sure?"

What could be the matter with these men? The honeyed accents of Mr. Herengoetz were tense, eager, apprehensive. There was sweat in the man's voice. Singleton felt in his pocket to make sure he had not lost the picture. Then he roared into the transmitter:

"I've got the picture. What do you want me to do? Come in?"

There was dead silence for an instant, then a tremendous roar. The dulcet tones of the Colossus had changed to a bellow that boomed over the wire and shivered the tympanum of the receiver.

"Shall you come in? Oh shades of night! Shall you come in? Ye gods and split-tailed fishes! Can you fly, Mr.

Singleton? If you can't fly, grab an automobile. Beat it to this office. Break a record, man. To — with the police. Come in! Come in! Oh, do come in!"

Singleton hung up the receiver and stepped outside.



A BIG negro was cranking a fast-looking touring car at the curb.

"Where are you going with that car?" demanded the newspaper man.

"Private car. Goin' to the Fust National Bank. What's it to you?" retorted the Senegambian with a snarl.

"Five dollars if you land me outside the *Nation* office inside of twenty minutes," said Singleton.

"Got yo'. Roll in," was the ready answer, as Singleton exhibited a five-dollar bill.

An instant later he was speeding townward at a rate that must have smashed every speed ordinance to flinders.

Two policemen threw their clubs at the black chauffeur as the machine sped past. In eighteen minutes, by a very good watch, Singleton entered the *Nation's* wheezy elevator.

"Third, in a hurry," he ordered.

"Can't hurry this here wagon," snarled the boy.

For the second time that day Singleton emerged into the little wooden coop. But his reception on this occasion was not at all as the previous one had been. The tousle-headed boy with the slanting eye was waiting for him. As Singleton appeared this youth uttered an appalling yell. Simultaneously the door flew open and Singleton burst through it, to become the central figure in an extraordinary gathering.

Grouped in the foreground were Mr. Herengoetz, Mr. Bickerdyke and Mr. Sooner. Massed behind them were a dozen or more reporters led by Pancoast; rewrite men, telegraph operators, copy readers, stereotypers, and engravers.

It was like the male side of a comic-opera chorus grouping—just as the Prince comes in, you know, only there was no orchestra, except the jangling of machinery and the yelling of excited men.

Singleton held out the picture of Rosie. It was seized eagerly by Mr. Herengoetz, who instantly became surrounded by a pushing, mauling mob, anxious to catch a glimpse of the portrait.

"That's her!" yelled a man with a glass

eye. "I'd know her in a church. Yah, that's her."

Mr. Herengoetz hugged the picture to his massive breast and for an instant raised his expressive eyes in mute thanksgiving. A tear trickled down each of his plump white cheeks. Three times he kissed Miss Hahnheimer's portrait with fervent, resounding smacks. Then, with a series of elephantine bounds he gained the corner of the big room reserved for "artists." Placing the picture in the hands of Smithers, head of the picture department, Mr. Herengoetz roared triumphantly:

"Three columns wide—all over the paper. Yah, front page layout. Rush it!"

Then Mr. Herengoetz and Mr. Bickerdyke linked arms and danced together. Mr. Herengoetz was astoundingly nimble on his feet for so heavy a man.



DURING this extraordinary scene, Mr. Vest, the editor-in-chief, a dapper little man with a shrewd newspaper eye, had been standing on the edge of the crowd, his hands and a few inches of his bare arms poked deep into his trousers pockets.

The fact that he raised himself up and down on his toes may have indicated that he was interested despite his aloofness.

It was, in fact, the Old Man's story. He it was who had insisted on the hunt for Rosie's picture being kept up unceasingly. Hundreds of times in Mr. Vest's experience victory had been pulled out of defeat by persistent effort.

Now Mr. Vest made his way toward Singleton, who was receiving the congratulations of the staff, and remarked in a tone intended to be casual:

"Mr. Singleton, I'm interested to know how you got that picture. Of course you need not tell unless you wish to do so; merely curiosity on my part, you know."

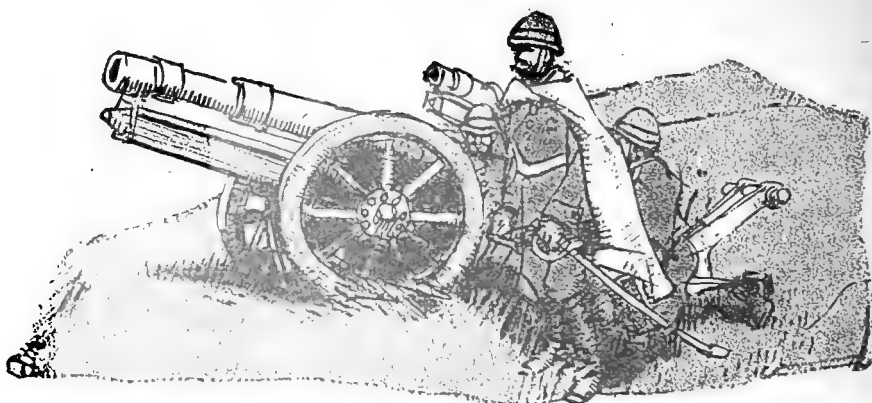
"No objection at all," said Singleton. "I asked the lady for it."

A wail of anguish from Pancoast greeted this announcement. The star man seemed on the verge of tears.

"Good Lord!" he gasped. "Good Lord! I never thought of that."

"Thank you," said Mr. Vest, smiling. "Write the story."

"Say!" broke in Mr. Bickerdyke a moment later, "what's your first name? I want to put you on the pay-roll."



WAR DAY BY DAY

Glimpses from a Boer Officer's Notebook

by George Albert Schreiner

WITH wilful intent I have killed one chicken and one squirrel. In both cases I obliged friends. One of them had mapped out a chicken dinner, but did not know how to get it without taking the life of the fowl. Fearing that he might bungle the job, owing to lack of nerve, I appointed myself executioner.

The squirrel I despatched after a young man, fond of toting a shotgun, had maimed the poor creature.

Even the flies I have swatted are few. I have always made it a point to give the insect a chance by shooing it. Insistence upon its course, however, is likely to bring action. In addition, I have caught a few fish—not for amusement, however.

My opinion of the man who destroys life of any sort for the sheer joy he finds in it is several degrees below zero, a fact which has made it difficult for me to gage the mental hang of some of our prominent peace advocates, who are not averse to hunting that does not have the sanction of necessity.

With my own attitude thus fairly well fixed, I shall proceed with the delineation of war as alluded to in the head of this effort.

"THE GIRL I LEFT BEHIND ME"

AT THE Braamfontein Station there had been much leave-taking. It seemed that every man who was to be rushed to the Natal border in the train that was to take my own organization, there, had a superfluity of relatives. Much falling into arms and kissing ensued; so much, in fact, that various veldcornets and the Commandant were despairing of ever getting that train under way.

Having no relatives to occupy me similarly, I was free to fathom the varying depths of the oceans of affections that surged hither and thither, leaving many an eye wet and many a throat half choked. There are advantages even in being without family. At least there is nobody to worry about you, and if it were possible to fight wars with men having no family ties, none other should be sent to the front. I admit that going to war is hardest on those who do not go, though I fear that heartstrings are sometimes subjected to great tension even in those at the front.

However, there was rampant a fine enthusiasm. Those *Rooinecks* were to be shown this time. The women seemed to be surest of this. Though I doubt that many

of the crowd knew it, the scene was one that would remind you of the women of a primitive Spartan settlement telling their husbands and sons to return either with their shields or upon them. I doubt whether the ill fated Marius ever contended with women as patriotic as those who bade farewell to their men at Braamfontein. It is curious how blood will tell, and how long it takes to modify the *homo sapiens*.

But finally the Penelopes had to be left behind. The Commandant availed himself of a ruse to get action. His predicament interested me, and so I followed him to the engine, where he told the driver to get under way a little, but not pull out until he had been given a second signal. This piece of strategy worked admirably. With several toots the engine put pull on the couplings, the train started and everybody rushed aboard. So well worked the ruse that the Commandant himself was nearly left behind.

I spent the greater part of that afternoon in efforts to establish the percentage of probabilities in which the many "good lucks" might work out. But only totals resulted. Within a few weeks many hopes would have proven fallacious indeed. There would be burials on the *veld* and tears in another part of it.

THE EFFICACY OF PRAYER

OVER the Blauwbergen had drifted great clouds—vanguards of the rainy season which was approaching. The terminal of all military trains was then Zandspruit, a little station in the Southeastern Transvaal, some thirty miles from the Natal border. Here everybody and everything was dumped from the train into mud several inches deep, though the rain had not yet done its worst. All night long it rained in sheets, with a slant that made even the platform of the station house impossible as shelter. The cold wind made things worse.

It was an inauspicious beginning for a war. So many thought. A night such as this might postpone a wedding, but war is run on a different schedule, as I remember telling somebody.

All night long there had sat at my side a figure wrapped in a blanket. Now and then the man had lit a match, but that and the smell of burning tobacco were the only manifestations that the figure was not a

bundle of something or other. It always seemed to me that if a man wants to be taciturn nobody has the right to make him talk. I suspect that on this point both of us held similar views.

"Brother," said the man beside me finally, in the first dim light of dawn, "this has been a bad night."

"It has," I assented. "We're likely to have more of them, however."

"That is right," commented the man, who, according to the sound of his voice, had seen the better part of his life.

"This sort of weather is better for farming than for war," I continued.

"That is right, nephew," said the man, suiting his address to the difference in our ages which the sound of my voice had transmitted to him.

"I forgot to say my prayers last night," said the old Boer after a while, possibly for the want of a better topic.

"Is that so, uncle?" I commented. "You will be able to make up for that to-night."

"You are not scoffing, nephew, I hope," inquired the Boer earnestly.

"Not a bit of it. No levity was intended," I explained.

"We will have to do much praying to overcome our enemy," said the Boer after another pause. "They are so strong."

"I think that much fighting in addition would be better," I remarked. "It is said that Providence is on the side of the big guns."

"Who said that?" asked the Boer in a tone that showed great interest.

"Napoleon," I replied.

"He who died on St. Helena, or he who was captured by the Germans at Sedan?" queried the burgher.

"The former," I answered.

"No wonder that he died on St. Helena," commented the old man. "I have tried the efficacy of prayer in war before and I have never been disappointed. I was at Majuba with Joubert. My, how those *Rooinecks* jumped over the precipices. I am sure that the Lord delivered them into our hands on that occasion. But our children are no longer pious, and for that reason we are likely to lose this war. What do you think?"

"We are not likely to win it except we get help from the Boers in Natal and the Cape Colony, or some foreign power intervenes," I admitted.

Slowly the old man rose to his feet, and gathering his rifle and haversack in the hand not occupied with keeping the blanket in place, he moved away.

"I am afraid that people such as you will lose us this war," he said to me in an even tone. "The young people of to-day are altogether too practical to find favor with the Lord. It is prayer that counts on the battlefield."

"And guns," I persisted.

Soon the gray dawn had swallowed the retreating figure, leaving me to contend with an undeserved rebuke. Since then I have had no difficulty, however, in gaging the religious fervor which made Europe a shambles at the beginning of the Sixteenth Century, the period in which the ancestors of the old man had sought a new home in the inhospitable regions around the Cape of Good Hope.

THE TRAGEDY OF THE YOUNG MAN

THERE was a large blackboard in one of the rooms of the Newcastle public school, which had been turned into a base hospital by the Red Cross of Pretoria. I had often watched an elderly woman, one of the nurses, or possibly the matron, chalk names on this board, when not wiping them off. For several days it was the only amusement I had. A fractured jaw bone, and blood poisoning as a complication, are likely to keep a man fastened to his pillow. Some of the names that were wiped off belonged to men who had been discharged or sent for further treatment to Pretoria; not a few belonged to men who no longer needed names.

On the afternoon of February 3, 1900—the date is important—the woman again ascended the little dais before the blackboard to wipe out one of the names. My eye fell on her hand just as she went over the last letters of the proper noun Pretorius. There had been quite a little commotion in the rear of the room, and a little later two husky Zulus had carried out a cot; on the cot a man.

Here was a case in which the wishing of good luck had not availed, I thought, and promptly went to sleep. In that sleep my subconscious other self was taken into a region which I could dimly identify as being somewhere near the Tugela. I was sharing blankets with another man, a youngster

whom I had met once or twice, but with whom I do not remember having had much in common.

The man beside had grown restless and this had broken up my sleep. I fancied that there were two moons in the sky above me; otherwise the star-lit heavens seemed to be normal enough. Though dreaming, I was able to assure myself that this was a delusion, and was just about ready to resume my sleep when the man beside me rose to his elbow and extended the other arm as if to ward off a blow. Following the direction indicated by his outstretched arm, I discerned, with some difficulty at first, the head and shoulders of a woman having a strong resemblance to the elderly person who occupied herself with vital statistics in the base hospital. But the woman at our feet was rather good-looking; in fact I should say that she was distractingly comely. For me she seemed to have a smile of benign interest. What she had for the man beside me I do not know.

Unspeakable terror was written on his face. Once he fell back on the blanket, and then he rose to a sitting position, assuming the attitude of one supplicating. For several minutes, so it seemed, he wrung his hands and mumbled words I could not catch. Then, as if resigned to his fate, he fell back on the blanket, and after a few sobs was quiet. When next I saw the dream woman she was drawing a black blanket over the two of us. I dodged her unwelcome attention by rolling to one side into the grass.

"You mustn't stir about so violently," said the elderly person in the schoolroom at Newcastle, as she tucked the blankets about me. "You are likely to hurt yourself doing that."

It took the rays of a setting sun to bring me to the reality of things. Sure enough there was the blackboard and the elderly person, whom superfluity of flesh and years made anything but the woman of the dream.

On the afternoon of February 3, 1900, there died at sunset from injuries inflicted by a shrapnel the young man who had figured in the delusion of my fever-racked mind. A little later I had the opportunity to survey the spot on which he breathed his last. It resembled in no wise the *locale* of my experience in the hospital. The incident is known in history as the battle of Doornkop; it marks the third unsuccessful attempt of Buller to cross the Tugela.

The fact that the young man in question was hardly an acquaintance of mine excludes, I think, all psychic and telepathic nonsense and speculation. The episode, however, is remarkable as a demonstration of coincidence.

THE FISH WE DIDN'T CATCH

MYNHEER LAAGERWIJ was a prosperous Johannesburg lawyer with a taste for fine eating and drinking. Not that for this reason he was less of a soldier. As a matter of fact he had quite a reputation as a fighter. We had mutual friends in Jeppesdorp, and in this manner our paths crossed a few days before the general retreat from the Tugela River was ordered.

Laagerwij had brought with him a seine. I suppose lawyers have enough foresight to think of such little things. Having a seine in his possession and a river close at hand, he decided to eat fish. Unfortunately, he could not swim, and since swimming had to be done in the absence of a boat, he suggested that I do it for him. We were then stationed at Miller's Drift on the Tugela, and as far as we knew the English were then concentrating their efforts upon the Boer positions at Colenso. This gave the commandos which had done the fighting about Spionkop and Doornkop, in January and February, 1900, a chance to rest up, though reinforcements needed farther down the River kept the line as thin as it was prudent to make it.

"Let us go fishing to-day," suggested Laagerwij to me one morning after returning scouting parties had reported the coast clear. I had no objection to this, and since the river was little more than half a mile away, and the chances for an action virtually *nil*, the two of us were soon off.

With the eye of an expert my companion had soon located what he thought the best site for setting the seine. A little below the point where Buller had made a desperate attempt to break through there is a little sandy island, well covered with reeds. The nose of the island is a large rock, and behind this the waters have carried a long, thin tongue of detritus.

Opposite the island, on the north shore held by the Boers, was a big Indian cornfield, offering splendid cover in case of attack. The banks of the river, moreover, are overgrown with tall reeds, wild sugar-

cane, and here and there trees of some size. Here the two of us held counsel as to the best method of setting the net. I was not particularly anxious to slide through the reeds in the nude, but the views of Laagerwij as to the necessity of this prevailed in the end. The river was altogether too deep for wading, and the current such that, handicapped with clothing, a man would never reach the island.

A little later I had dived into the water and was struggling to gain the spit of sand in the middle of the river. There was no difficulty setting the seine, and all seemed well. As I was a novice at this sort of fishing Laagerwij was shouting instructions to me how the seine was to be brought in without losing too many of the fish. Probably his gourmet inclinations had already pictured the mess of fish that was to gratify them.

But many are the chickens that are counted before they are hatched. A bullet that had hit the rock at the head of the island catapulted through the air with a whine. Another, coming a little closer to me, sang in a high staccato and then buried itself in the bank a few feet away from Laagerwij.

"For the love of Heaven, jump in the water," shouted my companion as, turning on his heel, he disappeared in the cornfield.

But the situation was not such as to make this prudent. So, instead of following Laagerwij's well meant but poorly considered advice, I dodged behind the rock. It occurred to me that my naked body, contrasted by the dark waters of the Tugela, would make altogether too fine a target. Meanwhile Laagerwij kept shouting in the cornfield.

"For Heaven's sake jump in the water and swim ashore before they get too close," he bellowed from his cover. "There are at least forty of them; a scouting party. Quick, quick, quick!"

But the best I could do was to shout to Laagerwij to hold his peace. Here was a fine pickle to be in!

Thinking that I could not hear what he was saying, my companion after a while ventured out of the cornfield and repeated his fervent admonitions. I explained to him that my body in the water and against the dark green on the bank would be too sure a mark for the Lee-Metfords and that I had little inclination toward becoming so fine a target. Laagerwij had not been out

of the cornfield long before he drew a veritable salvo of fire. Naturally this drove him to cover, as it would any sensible man.

I put in some very interesting moments after Laagerwij had retreated. While the British scouts could not see me from the bank directly opposite, they would be able to see me easily enough if they decided to investigate the island from the bend in the river, not more than four hundred yards upstream.

The thing that made my position doubly critical was that at various points the Tugela is infested with crocodiles. Whether this particular part of the river harbored this pest I had never heard, but knowing that at times they were plentiful near Colenso, only some twenty miles to the east, I had little assurance that the ugly snout of one of the reptiles might not put in appearance any second.

After a little while the corn parted again and Laagerwij once more hove into view.

"Don't you think that you can make it?" he asked pleadingly.

"Not a chance in a thousand as long as the *Rooinecks* are on the *qui vive*," I replied with some irritation. "What is more, you'd better keep out of sight now. Your coming back merely confirms to them the fact that I am still in the water. I'll get out when I think it safe and not before."

But it was more bullets which drove Laagerwij back into the cornfield. I suspected that the enemy was firing merely in the general direction of the corn, which Laagerwij's moving about had disturbed. Needless to say, that did not help me any. The water of the river was none too warm, February on the *veld* being the end of Summer. Already I began to feel numb, and probably the danger of drowning would before long be added to my other predicaments.

But the British scouts, or whoever they were, could not remain in the valley long without getting attention. The Boers had by then been shown the value of keeping constantly in contact with their antagonists, and so it came that after a little while quite a little outpost action developed. A scouting party of burghers, returning from the direction of Springfield, then the headquarters of Buller, discovered the men who had fired on the industrious fishermen, and gave chase.

The scrap was a lively one while it lasted. Two riderless horses were taken by the

Boers. As soon as I surmised that the men waiting for me were fully occupied, I drifted more than swam toward the bank, and a little later was donning my clothing in the cornfield. The seine, for all I know, is in the river yet.

I BREAK A PIECE OF SAD NEWS

THE commando to which my artillery unit was attached during the retreat from the Tugela River, early in March, 1900, was to be presented with colors. The good ladies of the *wyk*, or district, had turned out a veritable work of art. Down the staff ran a broad field of green silk, and the red, white and blue were of an equally expensive material. Furthermore, the whole was surrounded by a fringe of gold, and the name of the commando had been embroidered with a similar material. I have good reason to remember that flag.

A committee of men and women, all of them past the heyday of life, was to present the flag to the commando, with appropriate speeches and prayers. About noon the good burghers and their wives put in appearance, and to my dismay I discovered that some friends of mine were among them. There are times when friends can intrude. So also thought the veldcornet.

"You know that the two De la Reys were shot yesterday," said the veldcornet to me, as he watched Father and Mother De la Rey get off the wagon that had conveyed the presentation committee to the *laager*.

"I think I do," I remarked dryly, seeing an ugly job coming my way.

"Well, those people must have been on the train at least two days, and they can't have heard of it," commented the veldcornet.

"I agree with you," I said. "The Red Cross could hardly work that quick. You see, the De la Reys must have been on the way when it happened, and I dare say that nobody has gone to the trouble of acquainting them with the sad affair by telegraph while *en route*."

"You know the family well, don't you?" asked the veldcornet.

"Somewhat," I replied, anxious to divert a sad mission.

"Get out; you know them better than anybody in the camp. The two boys were always hanging around you," insisted the officer.

"Suppose that's so; what of it?" I asked.

"Well, it'll be up to you to break the news to them," said my *vis-à-vis*, as if giving an order.

"Not if I can help it," I rejoined, ready to walk off.

"Here," said the veldcornet, "you can't do that. You've got to tell them."

"Why not tell them yourself? You are in command here. What have I got to do with your men and what becomes of them? If you haven't the nerve, go to the Red Cross tent and get them to tell the De la Reys."

"Can't you do a fellow a favor?" insisted the veldcornet reproachfully.

"I can, but this doesn't happen to be any of my business. And I admit it is nasty business. Two sons out of three killed in one day is likely to cause more weeping and lamenting than I can stand."

"Can't you tell the old man and then sneak away?" pleaded the officer.

"I suppose I can do that all right," I said. "But it will take some comforting to prevent the worst."

Before I knew what had happened the veldcornet had walked off. I tried to find him in the crowd which had gathered around the wagon that had brought the committee into camp. But in doing this I had put my foot in it properly. Old man De la Rey spied me, shouted, "Hallo," made a dash through the crowd, and began to pump-handle my arms.

"Glad to see you," he shouted. "My, how you have tanned up! Where are my boys?"

"One of them ought to be around here," I explained.

"It's funny that I don't see any of them. Are they out of the camp?" asked Father De la Rey, still shaking my hand and looking over the crowd about him.

As if by common consent the burghers avoided the De la Reys as one would a plague victim, and so it came that within a few minutes I had both Mr. and Mrs. De la Rey in my tent. I had promised them that I would find one of the boys. But that scamp had gone into hiding, as I learned from him afterward. As soon as he had caught a glimpse of his parents he had vanished down a *kloof* in the rear of the camp.

I don't remember under what pretext I finally induced old De la Rey to leave the tent, but if I am not mistaken I offered to introduce him to a machine gun. At any

rate we got no farther than the fire, some thirty paces from the tent, when I made up my mind to break the news to him.

First I sent Sixpence, a Kaffir who did the chores for my mess, to get some water. I wanted to get him out of the way. On the *veld* white men do not permit blacks to see their emotions.

"Well, uncle," I said, after the Kaffir had gone, "I have sad news to tell you. If you had stayed at home you would have heard it before now."

Two gray and piercing eyes looked into mine with disconcerting steadiness.

"What is it?" said the old man, no louder than a breath.

"Philip and Erasmus were killed yesterday," I blurted out.

"Killed yesterday?" echoed the old man. "Killed? Are they dead? You don't mean that I have lost two of my boys—Philip and Erasmus? Philip and Erasmus!"

There was a vacant stare in the old man's eye. It seemed to me that he had difficulty remembering who Philip and Erasmus were.

"Henry is alive, however," I said consolingly.

I grabbed the old man's shoulder just in time. Had I not done so he would have fallen into the fire. But the next moment he had regained his composure.

I remembered that there was something I wanted to say, but for the life of me I couldn't think of it.

For a few minutes the old man gazed into space, trying hard to realize the full extent of the blow that had fallen upon him, and trying harder to gain control of his feelings. Big tears were running down his cheeks and over his gray beard.

"God willed it," he said finally, as he passed his coat sleeves over his eyes in awkward movements.

But again and again he wiped his eyes with the sleeves, lapels and flaps of his coat. Those tears would come, no matter how he tried to stem them. There was that peculiar pucker about his lips that men show when something tugs roughly at the heartstrings.

"Philip and Erasmus!" he moaned once or twice. "My boys, my boys!"

With much patting on the shoulder and consoling terms—a veritable flood of them—I finally succeeded in bringing old De la Rey to approximately his usual self.

"Who is to tell my wife?" he asked helplessly, when it had dawned upon him that

he would have to share his burden with the mother of the boys.

My heart fell into my boots, figuratively, and, I thought, actually.

"I could never tell her," pleaded the old man. "Won't you tell her? Please do! I am afraid that she suspects something already from the many evasive answers she got. It will kill her! It will kill her!"

"Don't you think, uncle, that you could make a better job of it than I can? I'm altogether too blunt for so delicate a job," I begged.

"No, I couldn't do it," insisted the old Boer. "If I told her she would carry on something frightful. If you tell her she is apt to control herself better. We don't want to make a show of ourselves in this camp."

Well, I broke the news to Mefrouw De la Rey—in almost the same manner. For an hour the poor old woman lay in the tent moaning and sobbing. Then she washed her face and attended the presentation ceremony as if nothing had happened. Of the two she showed the greater control.

It took two men to drag Henry into the presence of his parents. When finally I had virtually thrown him into my tent, I closed the flaps and walked away. All night long a candle burned in the tent, and now and then faint sobbing would break upon the solitude.

Next morning the De la Reys went home. Mrs. De la Rey had begged the Commandant to let Henry go with them. He was the last of her boys, she pleaded, and she would need him more now than would the Republic.

"I am sorry we have put you to all this trouble," she said to me as the wagon slowly moved off. "We hope to see you again."

"We do," joined in the old man. "We do!"

As was said before, there are advantages in having no family to speak of.

I TRANSCRIBE SOME MUSIC

ON MY transfer from Natal to the Orange Free State, toward the end of March, 1900, I had occasion to spend two or three days in Johannesburg. Roberts and Kitchener, having eliminated General Cronje and generally disorganized the Boer forces, were pushing north with might and

main. This led to an additional levy of men—mostly grandfathers and boys. To give the commandos so raised a reasonable sprinkling of seasoned blood, some of the commandos in Natal had to be drafted on. The new organizations also needed at least a make-believe of artillery, and thus it came that my unit had to be transferred.

Men have been known to do odd things in military camps. Yet it is quite possible that I did one of the oddest. I copied three pieces of music; one of them with the title, "Oh, Winds That Blow from the South." The other — don't laugh — was headed, "Take Back the Heart That Thou Gavest." Smile away if you want to; I am smiling myself. The third was, "The Last Rose of Summer."

Of course, a man copies music only for certain people—generally young girls. But in this case the *quid pro quo* was not love, though, had the fortunes of war been kinder, there is no telling what might have happened.

The fact of the matter is that the young person who wanted to get these three particular sheets of music copied had been extremely kind to me. I had met her father in the field, and when he heard that I was to be transferred, he asked me to call on his family in Kensington, and assure its members that he was hale and hearty.

On my first afternoon at Johannesburg, I found time to carry out my trust. A very comely young person met me on the veranda of a rather pretentious house, and replied in the affirmative to my inquiry whether or not a Mr. Bezuidenhout lived there. I explained that I had a message from the head of the family, who, when last seen, was in the best of spirits, though a little worried about those at home and his law practise.

Of course, I would step in the house. A little later I was sitting in a most comfortable Madeira chair, repeating to Mrs. Bezuidenhout what I had already told the young person. I fear that to see a warrior bold from the front who actually knew father was somewhat of a sensation in this quiet and refined family. Where was I going to stay, pending the arrival of the ammunition from Pretoria? Well, I didn't know. Some freight shed at Braamfontein or Fordsburg might have to be my lodging until I was ready to go.

I was assured that there was ample room

in the house, and that the family would be only too glad to have me accept the little it could offer me.

That same afternoon I enjoyed a regular five o'clock tea—city Boers have adopted this rite—and answered more questions than I took breaths. For two full days this round of pleasure and enjoyment lasted and then the ammunition came. I confess that I have not been a hero since.

There was some delay at Klerksdorp, a point in the Southeastern Transvaal, where the reorganizations took place. This gave me the first opportunity to copy the sheets of music. Just to repay the kindness shown me by the Bezuidenhouts, I had offered to do this clerical job, after I had been assured that several attempts made to replace the pieces had failed and that probably they would have to be imported from England, a thing which a high degree of patriotism had made impossible. The young person would no more think of touching another thing "Made in England" than she would think of jumping to the moon. I discerned a way out.

"I am somewhat of a draftsman on military maps," I suggested. "Maybe I'll be able to transcribe the notes for you."

"But you wouldn't have the time, would you?" asked the young person.

"Sometimes whole days pass without anything to do," I explained.

So it came that among the things I unpacked in a room of the wrecked Stock Exchange Building in Klerksdorp, I found a mailing tube, and, inside of it, the much tattered and torn music sheets, as well as a liberal supply of blank paper ruled for the task before me.

"What have you there?" asked one of my friends, eying the music sheets curiously. "Trying to start a military band?"

"No, sir. I'm going to copy this stuff," I replied.

"Going to copy it?" repeated the fellow, with a guffaw ready to burst forth.

I had some difficulty suppressing his haw-haws.

"If you say a word of this to anybody, I'll get even with you," I threatened. "It's none of your business, anyhow. So keep quiet."

"Are you to copy that stuff for the boxes of food they gave you?" continued my tormentor.

"I bought that," I explained, trying hard to put conviction in what I said.

"That stuff is home made," insisted the other. "You can't fool me on that. Do you think that bakers make such biscuits? Not on your life. And here what does it say on this card—'God bless those who fight for our country.' I suppose the baker wrote that too."

With voluminous comment on his unmitigated cheek, I finally caused my friend to subside. In return for some of the biscuits and other choice morsels, he promised to aid and abet me in the copying of the music. As an accessory to the fact his duties consisted of doing outpost work whenever I was busy with the work in hand. Poor Cotzee! He later joined the casualty list.

To transcribe music, especially when you are bent upon giving a fair imitation of copper plate, is a hard task, more so when the technicalities of this fine art are strangers to you. So I faithfully labored away; first in the ruins of the Exchange Building, and then in various camps. But the pains taken were worth while. A final proof-reading showed that I had forgotten only one mark—a grace note which a crease in the original had almost obliterated.

One day, then, I packed original and transcript in the mailing tube and consigned it to the tender mercies of the Veldpost—a sort of military mail service remarkable chiefly for the frequency with which it would lose matter placed in its care. Whether or not it reached the addressee is something of which I have no ken. Selah.

A BRUSH WITH THE ENEMY

COMMANDANT KRIEGER, in charge of some five hundred men holding the Vaal River at Coalmine Drift, south of the Klerksdorp mentioned before, had been instructed by General Jooste to conduct a series of reconnaissance movements in the direction of Kopje Alleen and Rhenoster River. The English on their march to Kroonstad had spread out fan-like and were anxious to envelop the burghers' forces from the west, throwing them if possible upon Johannesburg, in a retreat that was to give no chance of escape. In this they failed, principally because Commandant Krieger did as ordered and went to his task with a vim that insured thoroughness.

But Krieger was seriously handicapped. His commando consisted mostly of very old men and young boys, not the material one

would take on a scouting trip, and moreover many of them had mounts to whom a saddle was yet something to be shied at. At his wits' end, Krieger decided to press the artillerymen into service, though general practise was against this. However, our left flank was well protected, and since toward the south and west we could do no more than collide with the British outposts, this measure of expediency had every sanction. Already the artillery had begun to double up on its works in regular tent show style—using gun and carbine in a sort of big-drum-and-piccolo turn.

For almost two days that lanky Krieger rode the legs off our horses. On the third we came to Bothasville, or, to be exact, close to it, and then we discovered that contact with the British outposts was a universal condition. However, Krieger, conscientious man that he was, insisted upon going farther west.

"You'd better ride back to-night and let General Jooste know what conditions are," said Krieger to me.

After resting my horse for several hours on the farm we were passing when the Commandant reached his conclusion to send me back, I set out on one of the weariest rides I have known. The Orange Free State in these parts is a high plateau, semi-arid and sparsely populated. In addition roads are few, and at this time of the year—May—there is little water in the *spruits* and *riviers*.

About twelve o'clock that night the barking of some dogs showed me that I was nearing a farm, and with the gait of my horse showing every trace of weakness, I decided to off-saddle for a little while. It was a much perturbed old patriarch who told me that in the outhouse I could get all the *haver*—oats on the stalk—I wanted, and that he would make some coffee for me. But what I wanted more than coffee that night was sleep.

I knew, however, that if I fell asleep there would be no chance of my waking up in time to resume my journey before daylight broke. The old man, however, assured me that he was a light sleeper and that he would call me at about two o'clock, and that he also would have some breakfast ready for me then. Bebee—that is my horse—was soon doing justice to the best forage he had tasted in months, and I stretched myself on the straw.

When the old man had succeeded in bringing me to my senses the sun was rising. He explained that, his rest having been broken by me earlier in the night, he had overslept himself. His apologies were as profuse as his breakfast was good.

Riding away from the farm I noticed that the poor old soul had hoisted a white rag in token of submission to the new state of things. He had done this none too soon.

The reason why I wanted to get away early in the morning was that in the natural order of military operations the outposts of the enemy, especially the cavalry screens, would have deployed in a direction almost parallel to the course I had to take to reach Schuman's Drift, where General Jooste's camp was located. Riding through a hostile line is an easy undertaking in comparison with this.

But I trusted to luck and the speed of my Basuto pony. Both of them stood by valiantly.

After riding some four or five miles I discerned at the bottom of a *vley*—a broad depression peculiar to this country—the course of a river. Through the morning mist I saw the thickets of willows, cape beeches, and other woods, which the water of the *spruit* had nursed.

My road led across the riverbed, but when within a half mile of the drift I decided to cut across the country, making a sharp turn to my left. But, like most South African riverbeds, this one had banks fully forty feet high. There are little vegetation and humus to keep the floods of the rainy season in check, with the result that the water rushes through these little cañons in turbulent masses, each rain making the *zandspruit*, as they are called locally, deeper.

Thinking the matter over, I decided that I had no business keeping to the trail anyway; that probably this would be followed by some hostile cavalry in case it had penetrated so far north. But to get across that *spruit* without breaking bones seemed impossible, and I was, therefore, obliged to follow the bed of the stream in the direction of the drift. After all, I would have to stick to the road long enough to get across.

My caution increased as I neared the Drift, and nothing of it was misapplied. Through some trees ahead of me I noticed what I thought was a thin column of smoke. I stopped my horse and slid to the ground.

Crawling on all fours to the very edge of the bank, I discovered the origin of the smoke. Somebody had made a camp-fire a little distance off the Drift, and had forgotten to put it out.

I was quite sure that none of our men had stopped here, when on the preceding noon we had ridden through the Drift. I was equally positive that there was no other body of Boers in the vicinity, and these were not days in which burghers trekked. The families who had thought it best to get out of the way of the British had crossed into the Transvaal many days ago.

There was no doubt that I had run into a British outpost. But near the fire no trace of anything alive could be seen. Evidently the men had cooked breakfast here and had then ridden on.

A few minutes afterward I was examining the site of the fire. Men had slept there, and cooked at least two meals. They had kept their horses in a dense willow thicket on the edge of the *veld*, and, so far as I could ascertain, the party must have had some thirty animals. I tried to learn something from the tin cans around the fire, but whatever they had contained had been warmed in them, with the result that the labels had been burned off. My efforts in this direction were better rewarded when I ran after a piece of paper which the breeze had blown into view from somewhere. Just as I was about to pick it up, the wind turned the piece of paper over, and in large type the words *Sydney Bulletin* stared me in the face.

Here was a fine state of affairs. Single-handed I was to meet what was undoubtedly part of the crack cavalry service of the British Army. The Australian scouts—that is the only name they had ever been given in our camps—were men of action, hard riders and sure shots.

I confess that I did not feel especially comfortable for the next few minutes. St. Helena appeared as a certain alternative to sudden death.

A survey of the *veld* with my field glasses showed me that the party who had breakfasted at the Drift was not in sight. But I knew the terrain to be treacherous. On the whole a vast plain, bounded only by the horizon in the south, west and north, and a low chain of hills in the east, the district is well broken up with depressions, and for this reason vigilance availed for short distances only.

I had ridden over the second *bill*, as the Dutch call the crest of hill and mountain, when the report of a rifle came from my left. The man had aimed so badly that I did not hear the spin of the bullet. But before I could do more than cast a hasty glance in the direction from which the shot had come, a bullet whizzed past me close enough to disperse whatever doubt there was in my mind. Others came, but before more could show me marked attention I was off at breakneck speed.

It is no easy matter to pick off a man riding at a stretching gallop. I knew that so long as I could keep distance between myself and the Australians, the odds would be in my favor. I soon had my pursuers well behind me, and since an attempt to head me off required a greater leeway of speed than my horse would leave them, I had little to fear.

Unfortunately, I had not counted on the flankers. Very fortunately the flankers made a mistake. Looking to the right, I saw five men careering across the *veld* as fast as they could. But they were going in a direction oblique to my rear, and before they had noticed me I had passed them. Evidently they had heard the shots of their comrades while down in a depression, and instead of riding to the crest of the rise next to them, they had followed the course of the *vley*, in an effort to gain the main body to the left of me.

But the flankers were hard to shake off. To follow me on the road would have meant a loss of some twelve hundred yards for them; to get down and fire from the ground meant a loss of time. Another thing that helped me was that the road took a slight bend to the left.

On we sped. The fire of my pursuers was wild and useless. I think that of some fifty or sixty shots I heard no more than two or three bullets sing past me. When I reached the next crest, the Australians had given up the chase, and were riding to the west in a group. As a reminder that I was still in the ring, I fired several shots in their direction. Though they were then over twenty-five hundred yards away, a little extra elevation of my carbine ought to have convinced them that I was not averse to getting even for the scare they had given me. Later in the day, Krieger's men ran into what seems to have been the same body, bringing two of them into camp slightly

wounded. Much as I would have liked to have palaver with them, I could not do so, for the reason that I was then up at Schuman's Drift, trying to explain by means of diagrams and maps drawn in the sand what General Jooste found hard to understand.

I GO A-COMMANDEERING

HAVE you ever sat in a rose-and-vine-covered farmhouse on a bright Summer's afternoon and speculated on the sort of people who in times of peace had inhabited it? Well, it's an odd experience, a little sad besides, and one likely to leave your heart a little softer.

I had started that morning on a commandeering expedition. In polite military parlance this is called a "requisition." As applied to the Boers the verb "to commandeer" has sometimes been made to appear a very good synonym for "to steal," or take by force. However, this is slander—base slander.

I started out that morning with thirty pounds sterling in gold, Transvaal currency, every one of the sovereigns bearing the bas-relief of Oom Paul, save one which carried that of Queen Victoria. In addition I had one hundred and fifty pounds sterling in greenbacks. The currency was intended to form part payment for such forage as I might commandeer from Boers; the greenbacks were to be the *quid pro quo* for the mealies I was to take from the English farmers.

In compliance with orders I had commandeered as much corn, oats and hay as six ox wagons could carry, giving the Boers half cash and half greenbacks, and the others all greenbacks, as per instruction. That the greenbacks never became redeemable is not my fault. It is a chance which people take. The British Government might have shown itself a good sport by honoring the just and proper debts made by the Boer Governments. That stage of civilization we have not reached yet, however.

Lest somebody should think that I had got anything out of the deal, I wish to state here specifically that I have now in my possession several Transvaal greenbacks of high denomination which as an equivalent for services rendered have been despairingly inefficacious. So commandeering was not

as one-sided as sometimes it is made to look. But to return to the farm. With the wagon wheels squeaking and creaking under their loads, I decided that if I returned to camp before the wagons would get there, I would be set to more chores of this kind. I had been obliged to argue commandeering with some sort of strange missionary who held forth in plenty in the foothills of the Drakensberg, and who in addition suffered from the strong delusion that the Geneva Convention gave him rights which others did not have. As soon as I had ascertained that the large store of forage on his hands was not a necessity, but wealth, arguments ceased.

After I had roughly estimated each bag of mealies at two hundred pounds and handed over the requisite number of greenbacks, I bade him adieu. I will say, however, that a more disgusted man I have never seen in my life, nor one who could vow vengeance, secular and spiritual, in quite so fervent a manner, or accompanied with such a flood of invective.

Asked what he had intended to do with the forage, he was frank enough to admit that he was holding it for the British Army, and that this institution would pay good, reliable sovereigns instead of good-for-nothing greenbacks. I had the authority to resent such shameful attacks upon the sovereignty of the two Republics, but feeling stayed my hand.

I noticed, though, that the good man gathered up the greenbacks, hoping, perhaps, against hope at that, that in the end we might win and convert the fine lithographs into real coin of the realm. Alas, that day was not to come. But the man still has his Kaffir converts to grow more forage for him. I judge wholly by his sixty-five-inch girth, fat face, well groomed hands, and little wobbly legs, when I say that he never wielded an agricultural implement in his life.

A DESERTED PARADISE

BUT I had forgotten about that farm. With my right of eminent domain duly satisfied, and the wagons under way, I decided to pay another visit to a deserted farm where grew the most luscious peaches I have ever tasted. Lest the sense of propriety be offended, I shall state that these peaches were to be found in an orchard

of some twenty acres, and that I could eat but a few of them, which, ultimately falling to the ground from sheer ripeness, would have been consumed by a herd of pigs which even now was feasting on these Lucullan morsels.

Ruthless hands had gone through that farmhouse. On the veranda lay several broken chairs. The doorway to what had been the parlor was blocked with more broken furniture—curtains, table covers, portières and what not. On the floor broken pictures, bric-à-brac, more dismantled furniture, books, letters, papers, a lamp, and other things vied with one another to make confusion. In the bedrooms pillows had been disemboweled, and in the kitchen stew pans, pots and pottery formed a kaleidoscopic whole that would have broken the heart of any good Dutch housewife.

My survey over, I returned to the parlor, righted a wickerwork chair that had resisted demolition, and sat down.

Here was a happy home that had gone to the proverbial smithereens. Who were the owners? What had become of them? Had they trekked north or south when the war broke out? No doubt the books on the floor would tell. The first one I picked up was a history of the siege of Leyden in Dutch. The second dealt with the transactions of the Dutch East India Company and the Batavian Republic, and seemed to be the work of some historical society.

It was a psalm book, however, that gave me the name of the owner—Retief. Probably in the days of the *Groote Trek*, 1835-40, the grandfather of the family had come from Cape Colony, descended through the passes of the Drakensberg in search of a new home, and settled on this spot. I thought it not at all improbable that the Retief in question might have been a relative of the great Piet Retief who perished in Dingaan's Kraal.

Some men succeed in making farm life a thing for which some would leave paradise. The owner of this place had done this fully. There were flowers everywhere. Arbors of green had been laid out with a keen appreciation of the beautiful. Over the porch trailed climbing roses and vines, the latter just beginning to show the berries. What a pity that the efforts of a lifetime should thus be blighted!

There is little that I remember better

than this afternoon, and the sad fate of the homestead. Out in the sunlight the peaches ripened for none but pigs. The roses on the porch seemed to cry for attention, and soon the grapes would be ripe with no one to gather them. In the garden weeds had overrun everything, with here and there the seed stalk of a legume protruding from the lush grass. Over it all laughed a friendly sky that had never been bluer, and through the rooms fanned a breeze laden with perfumes and the odor of ripening verdure.

Faint were the booms of the Long Toms hammering away at the redouts of Ladysmith. From here they had the sound of muffled recussions. As I divided my attention between the noise of these great engines of war and the whispering of the foliage around the porch, I noticed that the big siege pieces were being fired with accelerating frequency. A sortie, perhaps. I must be off. One never knows in times of war what the next hour may bring.

Two months later I again came this way. The Boers had been beaten back from the Tugela and Ladysmith had been relieved, much to the relief of Generals Buller and White.

The missionary stood in front of his handsome residence.

"Ah, you robber," he said, as he recognized me. "At last Dutch tyranny has met its end."

"Don't be so sure about that, you roly-poly," I replied good-naturedly. "We're likely to come back. How are the crops this season? Just a little too late for the great clean-up you wanted to make with the British Army Service Corps. It's a pity, though, that the new crop isn't ready yet. That's a very fine stand of mealies down near the *spruit*."

"I shall bring this case to the attention of the British Government—to General Buller," he retorted, growing red in the face.

"You are welcome to do that," I returned affably. "I suppose I'll be in no end of hot water after you have had a personal interview with the General."

"He will put a price on your head," threatened the good man.

"Tut, tut. He won't even listen to you," I replied sweetly.

"I know your name," continued the fat man.

"You do, do you?" I retorted. "The

difficulty right at this moment is that I haven't much of an address to speak of. I suppose you think that I ate those mealies or sold them retail. If you have any doubts about that, just look at the commandeer notice, of which I left you a copy at the time. You sold your corn and oats to the Government of the South African Republic, now hitting the toboggan if I mistake not. Those greenbacks will be worth a ha'p'ny a ton when your case reaches adjudication. *Au revoir!*"

Verily, that man did have an opinion of himself and the Government whose protection he claimed! And such a nasty disposition besides!

A LITTLE EXERCISE IN SNIPING

THERE ought to be quite a number of English Royal Artillerymen extant who will remember how two Boer snipers caused two of their batteries to beat a hasty retreat at Belfast, Eastern Transvaal, in August, 1900. At first glance the thing looks ridiculous, but the artilleryman who has been in a similar fix will appreciate the fact that it is serious business to be within range of two riflemen able to hit the bull's eye with tolerable accuracy.

At Belfast, or Berg en Dal, as the Boers have styled the affair, a determined stand was to be made, and ultimately one of the hottest scraps of the campaign took place there. For nine days the enemy tried to break the line of the burghers by sheer force of metal. In the end they succeeded, of course. It is hard work to defend positions raked with a galling artillery fire to which the lack of ammunition prohibits so much as a reply. The Staats Artillery did not enjoy this predicament, but, as the French say, where there is nothing the King loses his rights—*ou il n'y a rien, le roi perd ses droits*.

One of the two snipers was a young chap by the name of Leipold, a cadet of the Pretoria Artillery School, who earlier in the day had vainly tried to make an impression on fifteen-pounders with a Maxim-Vickers. The best he had done was to draw a generous shrapnel rain.

The positions occupied by Boer and Britisher at this particular point were somewhat serpentine and divided by a little valley, favoring strongly an echelon line of defense, in whose holding the

burghers had proved themselves so adept by then. At the head of a sector Leipold and the other man had stationed themselves, ready to enfilade with two machine guns any "T" line of hostile infantry that might deploy in the valley. That the British artillery would rake the kopje with a fine-tooth comb as soon as these intentions became evident was one of the chances to be taken.

Behind the hills on which the Royal Artillery had taken position an angry sun was setting. Long bands of yellow and red streamed across the sky, throwing the crest of the British positions into bold relief.

There had been much indirect fire during the day. Try as we might we could not discover the whereabouts of the British pieces that seemed to be nearest to our position. But at sundown the man in charge of the English batteries made up his mind to move to the front.

"Look!" said Leipold, pointing. "Something is stirring over there."

Sure enough there was. Against the highly colored sky some pieces of artillery silhouetted themselves as they might upon a screen. Nine guns were taken to the crest of the hill and unlimbered in leisurely fashion.

"Getting ready for to-morrow," commented Leipold.

The men's first thought was to ply the machine guns, but considering the case pro and con, they finally decided to see what could be done with the Mauser.

Good cover had been found, and before long an odd contest between rifle and gun was in progress. The first shot laid low the horse of a man who seemed to be greatly concerned about something, if his mad careering about was an indication of this. The second did similar damage to one of the draft animals. Those bullets sped through the still evening air with almost unfailling accuracy.

"We've got them going," shouted Leipold, as the unlimbering proceeded with more speed.

"They'll have us going in a minute," remarked the other.

For five minutes or so the two snipers picked off whatever they could. But here was provocation that could not be overlooked. Five shells came in rapid succession. Soon the entire crest flashed tongues

of fire. Having hammered away at this point for eight days, the Royal Artillerymen knew the range to within a foot or two, and had a dark eastern sky and landscape given them a better opportunity to direct their fire, two funerals would have taken place that night. However, the two men on the *kopje* understood what the handicaps were. Only chance could have landed a shell near them.

So they continued to bang away with a rapidity that must have caused the enemy to believe that a whole commando was in action. No doubt the Royal Artillerymen were thoroughly puzzled. But they were not going to vacate the crest of the hill. British pugnaciousness made that impossible. Shells having proved futile, shrapnel was tried, with no better results, however.

The two snipers saved their bacon with the Commandant by that worthy witnessing a hasty retreat of the two batteries "just as the sun went down," as an old popular song has it. The gentleman was in a rage because the firing upon the hostile artillery had not been authorized by him.

"I suppose," said Leipold, as he cleaned his rifle after the crest had been cleared, "he wanted us to get his special permission. We of the artillery hit when we can, don't we?"

To this the other agreed heartily.

Next day the spot that had been swept clean the evening before became the position of three batteries that swept the "neck" held by the Johannesburg police commando like a tornado of fire. Of a four score of the bravest men in the Boer army, but a few lived to tell the tale. Leipold and the other man sat at the head of the sector and witnessed a beautiful example of artillery work, wondering how the position of the police commando managed to remain a feature of topography instead of becoming a mere hole in the ground.

THE EVACUATION OF MACHADODORP

INTO the cañon of the Crocodile River had all day long tumbled a pathetic human aggregate. Machadodorp, then the capital *pro tem.*, had been evacuated by the Government and the burghers, and the end seemed not far off—September, 1900.

Down the pass at Waterfall Onder, worming along the winding road to the deep valley below, crawled the caravan of

disaster. Now the endless string showed a commando, followed by its wagons, then sections of artillery with caissons empty, and fugitives who for some foolish reason had decided to get out of the way of the victorious enemy.

The organization to which I belonged then had been detailed to cover the approaches to the pass and guard the rear as soon as the stream of retreating men and fleeing women, dotards and women, should have been swallowed by the dark *kloof* below. But the end of that train never came. At sundown the rear was still at Helvetia and under the artillery fire of the British. Progress was despairingly slow. At the head of the pass the wheels had to be chained, and at two points farther down the chains had to be taken off and put on again.

Probably this is the most pathetic picture the war presented. Though fighting was not to cease for nearly another two years, the South African Republic, at whose building these men and women had so ardently labored, had come to an end. The President himself was a fugitive, albeit bound for Europe to beg for aid.

At gloaming there sprang up in the deep valley below a city of many lights. It was a weird picture as surveyed from an altitude of nearly three thousand feet. One by one the camp-fires increased, and up to the precipice on which I sat welled a muffled volume of sound, echoed and reëchoed by the mighty mountain walls.

A locomotive was darting back and forth. Soon another began to pull at a heavy load with many a reverberating cough. From the head of the cañon came the crash of an explosion that put the rack-and-cam part of the railroad line out of business for many weeks to come. In the freight yard of the station a big fire started, destroying such rolling stock as could not be taken along. Men hammered at pieces of iron, blasted switch frogs, and dynamited culverts.

Meanwhile the stream of humanity continued to pour into the cañon like water seeking its lowest level. Men as they passed on made remarks about the day. *Onse Mense, ons Volk*, and *onse Republiek* seemed all things of the past. Now and then a youngster would bandy words with another of his age, only to be reproved for such levity by an older person. In the gorge the number of fires increased, and finally the

rear of the retreating column came into view.

"Well, Connerty," I said as I shook his hand, "you are a sight. Things must have gone bad with you, what?"

The Cape rebel slid off his horse, wrung my arm until it ached and showed every emotion ascribed to the most loyal canine.

"Then you are still in this valley of tears," he shouted when he had managed to gain speech. "Say, they told me that you had cashed in down at Baviaansfontein."

"Nothing to it. Where did you get that footwear?" I put in, surveying his feet with a smile that persisted in coming.

"Where do you think I got it?" he returned, taking a look himself. "That ball slipper I found on a garbage heap at Machadodorp, and the table cover I lifted in a section boss's house at Dalmanutha. I had to cut off half of a trousers leg to clean my gun. Pretty rotten, ain't it?" he asked, climbing back in his saddle.

"I can't see how it could be worse," I commented. "If you get a chance to clear out of the country, you had better grab it. It's awkward to be a rebel. Those firing squads have come a whole lot closer the last two weeks."

With a disdainful sniff, Connerty rode on. "I suppose I'll see you down below tomorrow," he shouted, as he urged his horse into a canter.

A little later they were all singing hymns in the cañon, the sound reaching me in a melodious murmur that seemed a fitting chant over the grave of national aspirations which yawned cavernously at my feet.

And then some mighty voice began to bellow the first stanza of the Transvaal National Anthem:

Kennt gij Het Volk voll Heldenmoet
En doch so lang geknecht
Het haed geopfert Goed en Bloed
Vor Vrijheid en vor Recht—

Soon thousands joined him, filling the gorge with tossing reverberations and echoes. "There is some fight in them yet," I thought. Then I remembered the self-righting little man-toy who had contributed considerably to my delectation in early youth by refusing to lie down, no matter how many times he was knocked over.

By next noon the head of the pass was occupied by the British.





FOR THE PEACE OF INDIA

Talbot Mundy

SYNOPSIS—In common with every native of India, Mohammed Gunga—the big Rajput who had been an officer in the late Colonel Cunningham's now disbanded but still famous regiment of native cavalry—foresaw the Sepoy Rebellion of 1857. The English, however, would not be warned. In preparing against the catastrophe Mohammed Gunga had two things to do: he had to guard Rosemary McClean, a twenty-year-old girl who was helping her missionary father, Duncan McClean, to put down suttee in Howrah City; and he had also to provide an English leader whom native troops would follow in the coming conflict.

Mohammed Gunga leaves Ali Partab, his squire, at Howrah City, with directions to take Rosemary and her father to the fortress of his cousin Alwa whenever they ask for protection. Ali Partab, however, is kidnapped by the retainers of Jaimihr, the scheming brother of the Maharaja Howrah, who plans to seize the throne and abduct Rosemary as soon as the revolt breaks out. No one knows what has become of Ali Partab except Johanna, native duenna to Rosemary, who has slipped away to watch Jaimihr's palace. Meantime Mohammed Gunga, under permission, has tested out Ralph Cunningham, son of his old commander, who has just arrived in India as a subaltern, and finds Ralph the ideal gentleman soldier.

CHAPTER XI

From lone hunt came the yearling cub,
And brought a grown kill back;
With fangs aglut, "'Tis nothing but
Presumption!" growled the pack.

T. M.

WHEN Ralph Cunningham reached Peshawur at last he had no less than nine tigers to his gun, and that in itself would have been sufficient to damn him in the eyes of more than half of the men who held commands there. Jealousy in those days of slow promotion and entrenched influence had eaten into the very understanding of men whose only excuse for rule over a conquered people could be understanding.

It was not considered decent for a boy of

twenty-one to do much more than dare to be alive. For any man at all to offer advice or information to his senior was rank presumption. Criticism was high treason. Sport, such as tiger shooting, was for those whose age and apoplectic temper rendered them least fitted for it. Conservatism reigned—"high Toryism, sir, old port, and proud Prerogative!"

Mohammed Gunga grinned into his beard at the reception that awaited the youngster, whom he had trained for months now in the belief that India had nothing much to do except reverence him. He laughed aloud when he could get away to do it, at the flush of indignation on his protégé's face. Tall, clean-limbed, full of health and spirits, he had paid his duty call on a General of Division; with the boyish

enthusiasm that says so plainly, "Laugh with me, for the world is mine!" he had boasted of his good luck on the road only to be snubbed thoroughly and told that tiger shooting was not what he came for.

He took the snub like a man and made no complaint to anybody; he did not even mention it to the other subalterns, who most of them made no secret of their dissatisfaction and its hundred causes. He listened and it was not very long before it dawned on him that had not Mohammed Gunga gone with him to pay a call as well, the General of Division would not have so much as interviewed him.

Mohammed Gunga soon became the bane of his existence. The veteran seemed in no hurry to get back to his estate, which must have been in serious need of management by this time, but would ride off on mysterious errands and return with a dozen or more black-bearded horsemen each time. He would introduce them to Cunningham in public, whenever possible under the eyes of outraged seniors who would swear and fume and ride away disgusted at the reverence paid to "a mere boy, sir; a bally, ignorant young jackanapes!"

Had Cunningham been other than a born soldier, with his soldier senses all on edge and sleepless, he would have fallen foul of disgrace within a month. He was unattached as yet, and that fact gave opportunity to the men who looked for it to try to "take the conceit out of the cub, by gad."

"They"—everybody spoke of them as "they"—conceived the brilliant idea of confronting the youngster with conditions which he lacked experience to cope with. They set him to deal with circumstances which had long ago proved too difficult for themselves, and awaited confidently the outcome—the crass mistake, or oversight, or mere misfortune that, with the aid of a possible court martial, would reduce him to a proper state of humbleness.



PESHAWUR, the greatest garrison in Northern India, was there on sufferance apparently. For lack of energetic men in authority to deal with them, the border robbers plundered while the troops remained cooped up within the most unhealthful station on the list. The Government itself, with several thousand troops to back it up, was paying blackmail to the border thieves! There was not a

Government bungalow in all Peshawur that did not have its "watchman," hired from over the border, well paid to sleep on the veranda lest his friends should come and take tribute in an even more unseemly way.

The younger men, whose sense of fitness had not yet been rotted by climate and system and prerogative, swore at the condition; there were one or two men higher up, destined to make history, whose voices, raised in emphatic protest, were drowned in the drone of: "Peace! Peace is the thing to work for. Compromise, Consideration, Courtesy, these three are the keys of Rule."

The rulers failed to realize that Cowardice was their real keynote, and that the three-fold method that they vaunted was quite useless without a stiffening of Courage.

So, brave men who had more courtesy in each of their fingers than most of the seniors had all put together, had to bow to a scandalous condition that made England's rule a laughing-stock within a stone's throw of the city limits. And they had to submit to the indecency of seeing a new, inexperienced arrival picked for the task of commanding a body of Irregulars, for no other reason than because it was considered wise to make an exhibition of him.

Cunningham became half policeman, half soldier, in charge of a small special force of mounted men engaged for the purpose of patrol. He had nothing to do with the selection of them; that business was attended to perfunctorily by a man very high up in departmental service, who considered Cunningham a nuisance. He was a gentleman who did not know Mohammed Gunga. Another thing he did not know was the comfortable feel of work well done. So he was more than pleased when Mohammed Gunga dropped in from nowhere in particular, paid him scandalously untrue compliments without a blush or a smile, and offered to produce the required number of men at once.

Only fifty were required. Mohammed Gunga brought three hundred to select from, and when asked to do so in order to save time and trouble picked out the best fifty.

"There are your men!" said the Commissioner off-handedly, when they had been sworn in in a group. "Be good enough to remember, Mr. Cunningham, that you are now responsible for their behavior, and for the proper night-patrolling of the city limits."

That was a tall order, and in spite of all of youth's enthusiasm was enough to make any young fellow nervous. But Mohammed Gunga met him in the street, saluted him with almost sacrilegious ceremony, and drew him to one side.

"Have courage now, Bahadur! I ride away to visit my estates (he spoke of them always in the plural, as if he owned a county or two!). You have under you the best eyes and the keenest blades along the border, for I attended to it. Be ruthless! Use them, work them, sweat them to death! Keep away from messes and parades. Seek no praise, for you will get none in any case. Work! Work for what is coming!"

"You speak as if the fate of a continent were hanging in the balance," laughed Cunningham, shaking hands with him.

"I speak truth!" said Mohammed Gunga, riding off and leaving the youngster wondering.

Now there was nothing much the matter with the men on either side, taken in the main, who hated one another on that far pushed frontier. Even the insufferable incompetents who held the rotting reins of control were such because circumstance had blinded them. There was not a man among the highly placed ones even, who would have deliberately placed his own importance or his own opinion in the scale against India's welfare. There was not a border thief but was ready to respect what he could recognize as strong-armed justice.

The root of the trouble lay in centralization of authority, and rigid adherence to the rule of seniority. Combined, these two processes had served to bring about a state of things that is nearly unbelievable when viewed in the light of modern love for efficiency. Young men with the fire of ambition burning in them and a proper scorn for mere superficial ceremony, had to sweat their tempers and bow down beneath the yoke of senile pompousness.

Strong, savage, powder-weaned hill tribesmen, inheritors of egoistic independence and a love of loot, laughed loud and long and openly at System that prevented officers from taking arms against them until authority could come by delegate from somebody who slept. By that time they would be across the border quarreling among themselves about division of the plunder.

They had respect in plenty for the youth

and virile middle age that dealt with them on the rare occasions when a timely blow was loosed. Then they had proof that from that strange, mad country overseas there came men who could lead men—men who could strike, and who knew enough to hold their hands when the sudden blow had told; just men, who could keep their plighted word. No border thief pretended that the British *could* not rule him; to a man, they laughed because the possible was not imposed. And to the last, bold, ruffianly iconoclast they stole when, where, and what they dared.



THINGS altered strangely soon after Ralph Cunningham, with the diffidence of youth but the blood of a line of soldiers leaping in him, took charge of his tiny force of nondescripts. They were neither soldiers nor police. Nominally he was everybody's dog and so were they. Actually he found himself at the head of a tiny department of his own, because it was nobody's affair to give him orders. They had deliberately turned him loose "to hang himself," and their hope that he might get his head into a noose of trouble as soon as possible, the very liberty they gave him on purpose for his quick damnation, was the means of making reputation for him.

Nobody advised him, so with singularly British phlegm and not more than ordinary common sense, he devised a method of his own for scotching night prowlers. He stationed his men at well considered vantage points, and trusted them. With a party of ten he patrolled the city ceaselessly himself, and whipped every "watchman" he caught sleeping. One by one the black-mailing brigade began to see the discomfort of a job that called for real wakefulness, and deserted over the Hills to urge the resumption of raids in force. One by one the night-prowling fraternity were shot as they sneaked past sentries. One by one the tale of robberies diminished. It was merely a question of one man, and he awake, having power to act without first submitting a request to somebody in triplicate, on blue-form B.

The time came after a month or two, when even natives dared to leave their houses after dark. The time came very soon indeed when the nearest tribes began to hold war councils and inveigh against

the falling off of the supply of plunder. Cunningham was complimented openly. He was even praised by one of "Them." So it was perfectly natural and quite in keeping with tradition, that he should shortly be relieved, and that a senior to him should be placed in charge of his little force with orders to "organize" it.

The organization process lasted about twelve hours. At the end of that time every single man had deserted, horse and arms! Two nights later the prowling and plundering was once more in full swing, and Cunningham was blamed for it. It was obvious to any man of curry-and-port-wine proclivities that his method, or lack of it, had completely undermined his men's loyalty!

A whole committee of gray-headed gentlemen took trouble to point out to him his utter failure; but a Brigadier, who was not a member of that committee, and who was considered something of an upstart, asked that Cunningham might be appointed to a troop of Irregular Cavalry that had recently been raised. With glee—with a sigh of relief so heartfelt and unanimous that it could be heard across the street, the committee leaped at the suggestion. The proper person was induced without difficulty to put his signature to the required paper, and Cunningham found himself transferred to Irregular oblivion. Incidentally he found himself commanding few less than a hundred men, so many of whose first names were. Mahommed or Mohammed that the muster roll looked like a list of Allah's prophets.



CUNNINGHAM was more than a little bit astonished on the day he joined, in camp a long way from Peshawur, to find his friend Mohammed Gunga seated in a bell tent with the Brigadier. He caught sight of the long black military boot and silver spur, and half recognized the up-and-down movement of the crossed leg, long before he reached the tent. It was like father and son meeting, almost, as the Rajput rose to greet him and waited respectfully until he had paid his compliments to his new Commander. Cunningham felt throat-bound, and could scarcely more than stammer his introduction of himself.

"I know who you are and all about you," said the Brigadier. "Used to know your

father well. I applied to have you in my command partly for your father's sake, but principally because Rissaldar Mohammed Gunga spoke so highly of you. He tells me he has had an eye on you from the start, and that you shape well. Remember this is Irregular Cavalry, and in many respects quite unlike Regulars. You'll need tact and a firm hand combined, and you mustn't ever forget that the men whom you will lead are gentlemen."

Cunningham reported to his Colonel, only to discover that he, too, knew all about him. The Colonel was less inclined to be restricted as to topic, and less mindful of discretion than the Brigadier.

"I hear they couldn't stand you in Peshawur. That's hopeful! If you'd come with a recommendation from that quarter I'd have packed you off back again. I never in my life would have believed that a dozen men could all shut their eyes so tightly to the signs—never!"

"The signs, sir?"

"Yes, the signs! Come and look your troop over."

Cunningham found that the troop, too, had heard about his coming. He did not look them over. When he reached the lines they came out in a swarm, passed him one by one, eyed him as traders eye a horse, and then saluted him a second time, with the greeting—

"*Salaam, Chota Cunnigan Bahadur!*"

"Yes! You're in disgrace!" said his Colonel, noticing the color rising to the youngster's cheeks.

CHAPTER XII

Sons of the sons of war we be,
Sabered and horsed, and whole and free;
One is the caste, and one degree—
One law—one code decreed us.
Who heads wolves in the dawning day?
Who leaps in when the bull's at bay?
He who dares is he who may,
And he who does shall lead us!

T. M.

THE check that Ralph Cunningham's management of his police had caused, and the subsequent resumption of night looting, served to whet the appetites of the hungry crowd beyond the border. Those closest to Peshawur, who had always done the looting, were not the ultimate consignees by any means. There were other tribes who bought from them; others yet to whom

they paid tribute in the shape of stolen rifles. Cunningham's administration had upset the whole *modus vivendi* of the Lower Himalayas!

Though it all began again the moment he was superseded, there had been none the less a three-month interregnum, and that had to be compensated for. The tribes at the rear were clamorous, and would not listen to argument or explanation; they had collected in hundreds, led by the notorious Khumel Khan, preparatory to raiding in real earnest and with sufficient force to carry all before them at the first surprise attack.

They were disappointed when the pilfering resumed, for a tribal hillman would generally rather fight than eat, and would always prefer his dinner from a dead enemy's cooking-pot. They sat about for a long time considering whether there were not excuse enough for war in any case, and listening to the intricately detailed information brought by the deserting watchmen. And as they discussed things, but before they had time to decide on any plan, the Brigadier commanding the Irregulars got wind of them.

He was a man who did not worry about the feelings of senile heads of red-tape-bound Departments; nor was he particularly hidebound by respect for the laws of evidence. When he knew a thing, he knew it; then he either acted or did not act, as the circumstances might dictate. And when the deed was done or left undone and was quite beyond the reach of criticism, he would send in a verbose, voluminous report written out in several colored inks on all the special forms he could get hold of. The heads of Departments would be too busy for the next twelvemonth trying to get the form of the report straightened out to be able to give any attention to the details of it; and then it would be too late. But he was a Brigadier, and what he could do with impunity and quiet amusement would have brought down the whole Anglo-Indian Government in awful wrath on the head of a subordinate.

He heard of the tribesmen under Khumel Khan one evening. At dawn his tents stood empty, and the horse lines were long bands of brown on the green grass. The pegs were up; only the burying-beetles labored where the stamping chargers had neighed overnight.

The hunger-making wind that sweeps

down, snow-sweetened, from the Himalayas bore with it intermittent thunder from four thousand hoofs as, split in three and swooping from three different directions, the squadrons viewed, gave tongue, and launched themselves, roaring, at the half awakened plotters of the night before.

There was a battle of a kind, in a boulder-lined valley where the early morning sun had not yet reached to lift the chill. Long lances—devils' antennæ—searched out the crevices where rock-bred mountainmen sought cover; too suddenly for clumsy fingered Hillmen to reload, the re-formed troops charged wedgewise into rallying detachments. In an hour or less, there were prisoners being herded like cattle in the valley bottom, and a sting had been drawn from the border wasp that would not grow again for a year or two to come.

But Khumel Khan was missing. Khumel Khan, the *tulwar* man, he whose boast it was that he could hew through two men's necks at one whistling sweep of his notched, curved simitar, had broken through with a dozen at his back. He had burst through the half troop guarding the upper end of the defile, had left them red and reeling to count their dead, and the overfolding Hill spurs swallowed him.

"Mr. Cunningham! Take your troop, please, and find their chief. Hunt him out, ride him down, and get him! Don't come back until you do."



THE real thing! The real, red thing within a year! A lone command—and that is the only thing a subaltern of spunk may pray for! Eighty and eight hawk-eyed troopers asking only for the opportunity to show their worth! Lean, hungry hills to hunt in, no commissariat, fair law to the quarry, and a fight—as sure as God made mountains, a fight—at the other end!

There are men here and there who think that the day when they pass down a crowded aisle with Her is the great day to which other great days are all as gas jets to the sun. And there are others. There are men, like Cunningham, who have heard the drumming of the hoofs behind them, as they led their first un-apron-stringed unit out into the unknown. The one kind of man has tasted honey, but the other knows what fed, and feeds, the roaring sportsmen in Valhalla.

There were crisscross trails, where low-hung clouds swept curtainwise to make the compass seem like a lie-begotten trick. There were gorges, hewn when the Titans needed dirt to build the awful Himalayas—shadow-darkened, sheer as the edge of Nemesis. Long-reaching, pile on pile, the overlapping spurs leaned over them. The wind blew through them, amid silence that swallowed and made nothing of the din which rides with armed men.

But with eyes that were made for hunting, on horses that seemed part of them, they tracked and trailed—and viewed at last. Their shout gave Khumel Khan his notice that the price of a hundred murders was overdue. He chose to make payment where a V-shaped cliff enclosed a small flat plateau, and not more than a dozen could ride at him at a time. His companions scattered much as a charge of shrapnel shrieks through the rocks, but Khumel Khan knew well enough that he was the quarry; his was the head that by no conceivable chance would be allowed to plan fresh villainies. He might have run yet a little way, but he saw the uselessness and stood.

The troop, lined out knee to knee, could come within a hundred paces of him without breaking. It formed a base, then, to a triangle from which the man at bay could no more escape than a fire-ringed scorpion.

"Call on him to surrender!" ordered Cunningham.

A chevroned blackbeard half a horse-length behind him translated the demand into stately Pushtu. For answer the Hill chieftain mounted his stolen horse and shook his *tulwar*. He had pistols at his belt, but he did not draw them. Across his shoulder swung a five-foot-long *jerrail*, but he loosed it and flung it to the ground.

"Is there any here dare take me single-handed?" he demanded with a grin.

Of the eight and eighty, there were eighty-eight who dared; but there was an eighty-ninth, a lad of not yet twenty-two, whom Indian chivalry desired to honor. The troop had heard, but the troop had not yet seen.

"Ride in and take him!" ordered Cunningham, and there was a thoroughly well acted make-believe of fear, while every eye watched "Cunnigan Bahadur." The horses spurred and reined at once, pranced at their bits for just so long as a good man needs to

make up his mind. And "Cunnigan" rode in.

He rode in as a Rajput rides, with a swoop and a swinging saber, and a silent, tight-lipped vow that he would prove himself. Green though he was yet, he knew that the troop had found for him, had rounded up for him, had made for him his opportunity; so he took it, right under their eyes, straight in the teeth of the stoutest *tulwar* man of the Lower Himalayas.

He, too, had pistols at his belt, but there was no shot fired. There was nothing but a spur-loosed rush and a shock, a spark-lit, swirling, slashing, stamping, snorting *mêlée*, a stallion and a mare up-ended, two strips of lightning-steel that slit the wind—and a thud, as a lifeless border robber took the turf.

There was silence then—the grim, good silence of Mohammedan approval—while a native officer closed up a sword-cut with his fingers and tore ten-yard strips from his own turban to bind the youngster's head. They rode back without boast or noise, and camped without advertisement. There was no demonstration made. Only a Colonel said, "I like things done that way, quickly, without fuss," and a Brigadier remarked: "Hrrrump! 'Gratulate you, Mr. Cunningham!'"



LATER, when they camped again outside Peshawur, a reward of three thousand rupees that had been offered on the border outlaw's head was paid to Cunningham in person—a very appreciable sum to a subaltern, whose pay is barely sufficient for his mess bills. So although no public comment was made on the matter, it was considered "decent of him" to contribute the whole amount to a pension fund for the dependents of the Regiment's dead.

"You know, that's your money," said his Colonel. "You can keep every anna of it if you choose."

"I suppose I needn't be an officer unless I choose?" suggested Cunningham.

"I don't know, youngster. I can't guess what your troop would do if you tried to desert it!"

That was of course merely a diplomatic recognition of the fact that Cunningham had done his duty in making his men like him, and was not intended seriously. Nobody, not even the Brigadier, had any notion that the troop would very shortly have to dispense with its leader's services, whether it wanted to or not.

But it so happened that one troop at a time was requisitioned to be ornamental bodyguard to such as were entitled to one in the frontier city; and the turn arrived when Cunningham was sent. None liked the duty. No soldier, and particularly no Irregular, likes to consider himself a pipe-clayed ornament; but Cunningham would have "gone sick" had he had the least idea of what was in store for him.

It was bad enough to be obliged to act as bodyguard to men who had jockeyed him away because they were jealous of him. The white scar that ran now like a chin-strap mark from the corner of his eye to the angle of his jaw would blaze red often at some deliberately thought-out, not fancied, insult from men who should have been too big to more than notice him. And that, again, was nothing to the climax.

Mohammed Gunga chose to polish up his silver spurs and ride in from his "estates" on a protracted visit to Peshawur, with an escort that must have included half the *zemindaris* on the countryside as well as his own smart retinue. Glittering on his own account like a regiment of horse, and with all but a regiment clattering behind him, he chose the occasion to meet Cunningham when the youngster was fuming with impatience opposite the club veranda, waiting to escort a General.

On the veranda sat a dozen men who had been at considerable pains to put and keep the officer of the escort in his place. If the jingle and glitter of the approaching cavalcade had not been sufficient to attract their notice, they could have stopped their ears and yet have been forced to hear the greeting.

"*Ahal Salaam, sahib! Chota Cunnigan Bahadur, bohut salaam!* Thy father's son! Sahib, I am much honored!"

The white scar blazed, but Mohammed Gunga affected not to notice the discomfort of his victim. Many more than a hundred sabered gentlemen pressed round to "do themselves the honor," as they expressed it, of paying Cunningham a compliment. They rode up like knights in armor in the lists, and saluted like heralds bringing tribute and allegiance.

"*Salaam, Chota Cunnigan!*"

"*Salaam, sahib!*"

"*Bohut salaam, Bahadur!*"

The Generals, the High Court Judges and Commissioners on the club veranda sat un-

honored, while a boy of twenty-two received obeisance from men whose respect a king might envy. No Rajput ever lived who was not sure that his salute was worth more than tribute. He can be polite on all occasions, and what he thinks mere politeness would be considered overacting in the West, but his respect and his salute he keeps for his equals or his betters—and they must be men indeed.

The coterie of high officials sat indignation-bound for ten palpitating minutes, until the General remembered that it was *his* escort that was waiting for him. He had ordered it an hour too soon, for the express sweet purpose of keeping Cunningham waiting in the sun, but it dawned now on his apoplectic consciousness that his engagement was most urgent. He descended in a pompous hurry, mounted, and demanded why, by all the gods of India, the escort was not lined up to receive him. A minute later, after a loudly administered reprimand that was meant as much for the swarm of Rajputs as for the indignant Cunningham, he rode off with the escort clattering behind him.



BUT on the club veranda, when the Rajputs with Mohammed Gunga had dispersed, the big-wigs sat and talked the matter over very thoroughly.

"It's no use blinking matters," said the senior man present, using a huge handkerchief to wave the flies away from the polished dome which rose between two side wisps of gray hair. "They're going to lionize him while he's here, so we'd better move him on."

"But where?"

"I've got it! There's a letter in from Everton at Abu, saying he needs a man badly to go to Howrah and act Resident there; says he hasn't heard from the missionaries and isn't satisfied; wants a man without too much authority to go there and keep an eye on things in general. Howrah's a deuce of a place from all accounts."

"But that 'ud be promotion!"

"Can't be helped. No excuse for reducing him, so far as I've heard. The trouble is the cub has done too dashed well. We've got to promote him if we want to be rid of him."

They talked it over for an hour and at the end of it decided Cunningham should go to Howrah, provided a Brigadier could be

induced without too much argument to see reason.

"The Brigadier probably wants to keep him, and his Colonel will raise all the different kinds of Cain there are!" suggested the man who had begun the discussion.

"I've seen Brigadiers before now reduced to a proper sense of their own unimportance!" remarked another man. And he was connected with the Treasury. He knew.

But a week later, when the papers were sent to the Brigadier for signature, he amazed everybody by consenting without the least objection. Nobody but he knew who his visitor had been the night before.

"How did you know about it, Mohammed Gunga?" he demanded, as the veteran sat and faced him over the tent candle, his one lean leg swaying up and down as usual above the other.

"Have club servants not got ears, sahib?"

"And you?"

"I, too, have ears—good ones!"

The Brigadier drummed his fingers on the table, hesitating. No officer, however high up in the Service, likes to lose even a subaltern from his command when that subaltern is worth his salt.

"Let him go, sahib! You have seen how we Rajputs honor him—you may guess what difference he might make in a crisis. Sign, sahib. Let him go!"

"But—where do you come in? What have you had to do with this?"

"First, sahib, I tested him thoroughly. I found him good. Second, I told tales about him, making him out better than even he is. Third, I made sure that all those in authority at Peshawur should hate him. That would have been impossible if he had been a fool, or a weak man, or an incompetent; but any good man can be hated easily. Fourth, sahib, I sent by the hand of a man of mine a message to Everton sahib at Abu, reporting to him that all was not in Howrah as it should be, and warning him that a sahib should be sent there. I knew that he would listen to word from me, and I knew that he had no one in his office whom he could send. Then, sahib, I brought matters to a head by bringing every man of merit whom I could raise to salute him and make an outrageous exhibition of him. That is what I have done!"

"One would think you were scheming for a throne, Mohammed Gunga!"

"Nay, sahib, I am scheming for the peace of India! But there will be war first."

"I know there will be war," said the Brigadier. "I only wish I could make the other sahibs realize it."

"Will you sign the paper, sahib?"

"Yes, I will sign the paper. But——"

"But what, sahib?"

"I'm not quite certain that I'm doing right."

"Brigadier sahib, when the hour comes—and that is soon—it will be time to answer that! There lie the papers."

CHAPTER XIII

Even in darkness lime and sand
Will blend to make up mortar.
Two by two would equal four
Under a bucket of water.

T. M.

NOW it may seem unimaginable that two Europeans could be cooped in Howrah, not under physical restraint, and yet not able to communicate with any one who could render them assistance. It was the case, though, and not by any means an isolated case. The policy of the British Government, once established in India, was and always has been not to occupy an inch of extra territory until compelled by circumstances.

The native States, then, while forbidden to contract alliances with one another or the world outside, and obliged by the letter of written treaties to observe certain fundamental laws imposed on them by the Anglo-Indian Government, were left at liberty to govern themselves. And it was largely the fact that they could and did keep secret what was going on within their borders that enabled the so-called Sepoy Rebellion to get such a smoldering start before it burst into a blaze. The sepoys were the tools of the men behind the movement; and the men behind were priests and others who were feeding nothing but their own ambition.

No man knows, even now, how long the fire of rebellion had been burning underground before it showed through the surface; but it is quite obvious that, in spite of the heroism shown by British and loyal native alike when the crash did come, the rebels must have won, and have won easily, by sheer weight of numbers, had they only used their amazing system solely for the

broad, comprehensive purpose for which it was devised.

But the sense of power which its ramifications and extent gave birth to also fostered the desires of individuals. Each man of any influence at all began to scheme to use the system for the furtherance of his individual ambition. Instead of bending all their energy and craft to the one great object of hurling an unloved conqueror back to whence he came, each Maharaja strove to scheme himself head and shoulders above the rest; and each man who wanted to be Maharaja began to plot harder than ever to be one.

So in Howrah the Maharaja's brother Jaimihr, with a large following and organization of his own, began to use the secret system of which he by right formed an integral part, and to set wheels working within wheels which in course of time should toss him up on the ledge which his brother now occupied. Long before the rebellion was ready he had all his preparations made, and waited only for the general conflagration to strike for his own hand. And he was so certain of success that he dared make plans as well for Rosemary McClean's fate.



THERE is a blindness, too, quite unexplainable that comes over whole nations sometimes. It is almost like a plague in its mysterious arrival and departure. As before the French Revolution there were almost none among the ruling classes who could read the writing on the wall, so it was in India in the Spring of '57. Men saw the signs, and could not read their meaning. As in France, so in India, there were a few who understood, but they were scoffed at; the rest—the vast majority who held the reins of power—were blind.

Rosemary McClean discovered that her pony had gone lame, and was angry with the groom. The groom ran away and she put that down to native senselessness. Duncan McClean sent one after another of the little native children to find him a man who would take a letter to Mount Abu. The children went and did not come back again, and he put that down to the Devil, who would seem to have reclaimed them.

Both of them saw the watchers, posted at every vantage point, insolently wakeful; both of them knew that Jaimihr had placed them there. But neither of them looked

one inch deeper than the surface, nor supposed that their presence betokened anything but the Prince's unreachable ambition. Neither of them thought for an instant that the day could possibly have come when Britain would be unable to protect a woman of its own race, or when a native, however powerful, would dare to do more than threaten.

Joanna disappeared, and that led to a chain of thought which was not creditable to any one concerned. They reasoned this way: Rosemary had seen Mohammed Gunga hold out a handful of gold coins for the old woman's eyes to glitter at; therefore it was fair to presume that he had promised her a reward for bringing word to the man whom it was now known he had left behind. She had brought word to him, and had disappeared. What more obvious than to reason that the man had gladly paid her, and had just as gladly ridden off, rejoicing at the thought that he could escape doing service?

"So much," they argued, "for native constancy! So much for Mohammed Gunga's boast that he knew of men who could be trusted! And so much for Joanna's gratitude!"

The old woman had been saved by Rosemary McClean from the long-drawn-out hell that is the life portion of most Indian widows, even of low caste; she had had little to do ever, beyond snooze in the shade, and eat, and run sometimes behind the pony—a task which came as easily to her as did the other, less active parts of her employment. Her desertion, particularly at a crisis, made Rosemary McClean cry, and set her father to quoting "King Lear":

"Blow, blow, thou Winter wind!
Thou art not so unkind
As man's ingratitude!"

All Scotsmen seem to have a natural proclivity for quoting the appropriate dirge when sorrow shows itself. The Book of Lamentations, Shakespeare's sadder lines, roll off their tongues majestically, and seem to give them consolation, as it were to lay a sound, unjoyous basis for the proper enjoyment of the songs of Robbie Burns.

The poor old King of the poet's imagining, declaiming up above the cliffs of Dover, could have put no more pathos into those immortal lines than did Duncan McClean as he paced up and down between the hot walls of the darkened room. The dry

air parched his throat, and his ambition seemed to shrivel in him as he saw the brave little woman who was all he had sobbing with her head between her hands.

He turned to the Bible, but he could find no precedent in any of its pages for abandoning a quest like his in the teeth of disaster or adversity. He read it for hour after crackling hour, moistening his throat from time to time with warm, unappetizing water from the improvised jar filter; but when the oven blast that makes the Indian Summer day Tophet on earth had waned and died away, he had found nothing but admonishment to stand firm. There had been women too, whose deeds were worthy of record in that Book, and he found no argument for deserting his post on his daughter's account either. In the Bible account, as he read it, it had always been the Devil who fled when things got too uncomfortable and he was conscious of a tight-lipped, stern contempt for the Devil.

He had about made up his mind what line to take with his daughter, when she ceased her sobbing and looked up through swollen eyes to relieve him of the necessity for talking her over to his point of view. What she said amazed him; but not because it came to him as a new idea. She said, in different words, exactly what was passing in his own mind, and it was as if her tears and his search of the Scriptures had brought them both to one clear-cut conclusion.



"WHY are we here, father?" she asked him suddenly.

Because she took him by surprise he did not answer her at once. "We are here to do good, aren't we?" she continued. That was no question; it was the beginning of a line of argument. Her father held his tongue, laid his Bible down and listened on.

"How much good have we done yet?"

She paused, but the pause was rhetorical, and he knew it; he could see the light behind her eyes that was more than visionary. It was the light of practical Scots enthusiasm, unquenched and undiscouraged after a battle with Fear itself. She began to be beautiful again, as the spirit of unconquerable courage won its way.

"Have we won one convert? Is there one of all those you have taught who is with us still?"

The answer was self-evident. There was none. But there was no sting for him in

what she asked. Rather her words came as a relief, for he could feel the strength behind them. He still said nothing.

"Have we stopped one single suttee? Have we once, in any least degree, lessened the sufferings of one of those poor widows?"

"Not once," he answered her, without a trace of shame. He knew, and she knew, how hard the two of them had tried. There was nothing to apologize for.

"Have we undermined the power of the Hindu priests? Have we removed one trace of superstition?"

"No," he said quietly.

"Have we given up the fight?"

He looked hard at her. Gray eyes under gray brows met gray eyes that shone from under dark, wet lashes, and deep spoke unto deep. Scotsman recognized Scotswoman, and the bond between them tightened.

"It seems to me—" there was a new thrill in her voice—"that here is our opportunity! *Either* Jaimihr wants to frighten us away *or* he is in earnest with his impudent attentions to me. In either case, let us make no attempt to go away. Let us refuse to go away. Let us stay here at all costs. If he wishes us to go away, then he must have a reason and will show it, or else try to force us. If he is really trying to make love to me, then let him try. If he has pluck enough let him seize me. In either case we shall force his hand. I am willing to be the bait.

"The moment that he harms either you or me, the Government will *have* to interfere. If he kills us, so much the better, for that would mean swift vengeance and a British occupation. That would stop suttee for all time, and we would have given our lives for something worth while. As we are we can not communicate with our Government, and Jaimihr thinks he has us in his grasp. Let him think it! Let him go ahead! Sooner or later the Government *must* find out that we are missing. Then——!" Her eyes blazed at the thought of what would happen then.

Her father looked at her for about a minute, sadness and pride in her fighting in him for the mastery. Then he rose and crossed the little space between them.

"Lassie!" he said. "Lassie!"

She took his hand—the one little touch of human sentiment lacking to disturb his emotional balance. The Scots will talk readily enough of sorrow, but at showing

it they are a grudging race of men. Unless a Scotsman thinks he can gain something for his cause by showing what emotion racks him, he will swallow down the choking flood of grief, and keep a straight face to the world and his own as well. Duncan McClean turned from her, drew his hand away, and walked to open the slit shutters. A moment later he came back, once more master of himself.

"As things are, dear," he said gently, "how would it be possible for us to get away?"

"We canna gang awa'!" she quoted with a smile.

"No, lassie. We must stay here and be brave. This matter is not in our hands. We must wait and watch and see. If opportunity should come to us to make our escape we will seize it. Should it not come, should Jaimihr, or some other of them, make occasion to molest us, it may be—it might be that—surely the day of martyrs is not past—it might be that— Well, well, in either case we will eventually win. Should they kill us, the Government must send here to avenge us; should we get away, surely our report will be listened to. A month or two, perhaps only a week or two; even a day or two; who knows?—and the last suttee will have been performed!

"Ye're a brave lassie," he added, leaving the room hurriedly, to escape the shame of letting her see tears welling from his eyes—salt tears, that scalded as they broke their hot-wind-wearied bounds.

Five minutes later she arose, dry-eyed, and went to stand in the doorway, where an eddy or two of lukewarm evening breeze might possibly be stirring. But a dirtily clad Hindu, lounging on a raised, railless store veranda opposite, leered at her impudently, and she came inside again—to pass the evening and sultry, black, breathless night out of sight, at least, of the brutes who shut her off from even exercise.

CHAPTER XIV

So, I am a dog? Hence I must come

To do thy bidding faster?

Am I less than a dog? For a dog stays dumb,

And a dog obeys one master!

T. M.

NOT many yards from where the restless elephants stood lined under big brick arches, in an age-old courtyard, three sides of which were stone-carved splendor and the

fourth a typically Eastern mess of stables, servants' quarters, litter, stink, and noisy confusion, a stone door, slab-hewn, gave back the aching glitter of the sun. Its only opening, a narrow slit quite near the top, was barred. A man, his face close-pressed against them, peered through the interwoven iron rods from within.

Jaimihr, in a rose-pink pugree still, but not at all the swaggering cavalier who pranced, high-booted, through the streets,—a down-at-heel Prince, looking slovenly and heavy-eyed from too much opium, sat in a long chair under the cloister which faced the barred stone door. He swished with a rhino riding-whip at the stone column beside him, and the much swathed individual of the plethoric paunch who stood and spoke with him kept a very leery eye on it; he seemed to expect the binding swish of it across his own shins, and the thought seemed tantalizing.

"It is not to be done," said Jaimihr, speaking in a dialect peculiar to Howrah. "That, of all the idiotic notions I have listened to, is the least worth while! Thy brains are in thy belly, and are lost amid the fat! If my brother Howrah only had such counselors as thou, such monkey folk to make his plans for him, the jackals would have finished with him long ago."

"Sahib, did I not bring word, and overhear, and trap the man?"

"Truly! Overheard whisperings, and trapped me a hyena I must feed! Now, thou sayest 'torture him!' He is a Rangar and of good stock. Therefore no amount of torturing will make him speak. He is that pig Mohammed Gunga's man; therefore there is nothing more sure than that Mohammed Gunga will be here, sooner or later, to look for him—Mohammed Gunga, with the half of a Hindu name, the whole of a Moslem's fire, and the blind friendship of the British to rely on!"

"But if the man be dead when Mohammed Gunga comes?"

"He will be dead when Mohammed Gunga comes, if only what we await has first happened. But this rising that is planned hangs fire. Were I Maharaja I would like to see the Rangar who dare flout me or ask questions! I would like but to set eyes on that Rangar once! But I am not yet Maharaja. I am a Prince, a younger brother, surrounded, counseled, impeded, hampered, rendered laughable by fat idiots!"

"My belly but shows your Highness's generosity. At whose cost have I grown fat?"

"Aye, at whose cost? I should have kept thee slim on prison diet, and saved myself a world of useless problems! Cease prattling! Get away from me! If I have to poison this Ali Partab or wring his casteless neck I will make thee do it, and give thee to Mohammed Gunga to wreak vengeance on. Leave me to think!"

The fat former occupant of the room above the arch of the caravansary waddled to the far end of the cloister and sat down, cross-legged, to grumble to himself and scratch his paunch at intervals. His master, low-browed and irritable, continued to strike the stone column with his whip. He was in a horrid quandary.

Mohammed Gunga was one of many men he did not want, for the present, to offend seriously. Given a fair cause for quarrel, that irascible ex-Rissaldar was capable of going to any lengths, and was known, moreover, to be trusted by the British. Nobody seemed to know whether or not Mohammed Gunga reciprocated the British regard, and nobody had cared to ask him except his own intimates; and they, like him, were men of close counsel.

The Prince had given no orders for the capture of Ali Partab; that had been carried out by his men in a fit of ill advised officiousness. But the Prince had to solve the serious problem caused by the presence of Ali Partab within a stone-walled cell.

Should he let the fellow go, a report would be certain to reach Mohammed Gunga by the speediest route. Vengeance would be instantly decided on, for a Rajput does not merely accept service; he repays it, feudalwise, and smites hip and thigh for the honor of his men. The vengeance would be sure to follow purely Eastern lines, and would be complicated. It would no doubt take the form of siding in some way or other with his brother the Maharaja. There would be instant, active doings, for that was Mohammed Gunga's style. The fat would be in the fire months, perhaps, before the proper time.

 THE prisoner's presence was maddening in a million ways. It had been the Prince's plan (for he knew well enough that Mohammed Gunga had left a man behind) to allow the escape to

start. Then it would have been an easy matter to arrange an ambush, to kill Ali Partab, and to pretend to ride to the rescue. Once rescued, Miss McClean and her father would be almost completely at his mercy, for they would not be able to accuse him of anything but friendliness, and would be obliged to return to whatever haven of safety he cared to offer them. Once in his palace of their own consent, they would have had to stay there until the rising of the whole of India put an end to any chance of interference from the British Government.

But now there was no Ali Partab outside to try to escort them to some place of safety. Therefore there was little chance that the missionaries would try to make a bolt. Instead of being in the position of a cat that watches silently and springs when the mouse breaks cover, he was in the unenviable condition now of being forced to make the first move. Over and over again he cursed the men who had made Ali Partab prisoner, and over and over again he wondered how, by all the gods of all the multitudinous Hindu mythology, how, when, and by what stroke of genius he could make use of the stiff-chinned Rangar, and convert him from being a rankling thorn into a useful aid.

He dared not poison him—yet. For the same reason, he dared not put him to the torture, to discover, or try to discover, what Mohammed Gunga's real leanings were in the matter of loyalty to the *raj* or otherwise. He dared not let the man go, for forgiveness is not one of the virtues held in high esteem by men of Ali Partab's race, and wrongful arrest is considered ground enough for a feud to the death. It seemed he did not dare do anything!

He racked his opium-dulled brain for a suspicion of a plan that might help solve the difficulty, until his eye, wandering around the courtyard, fell on the black shape of a woman. She was old and bent, and she was busied with a handful of dry twigs, pretending to sweep around the stables.

"Who is that mother of corruption?" demanded Jaimihr; and a man came running to him.

"Who is that eyesore? I have never seen her, have I?"

"Highness, she is a beggar woman. She sat by the gate and pretended to a power of telling fortunes—which it would seem she

does possess in some degree. It was thought better that she should use her gift in here, for our advantage, than outside to our disadvantage. So she was brought in and set to sweeping."

"By the Curse of the Sin of the Sack of Chitor! Is my palace, then, a midden for the crawling offal of all the Howrah streets? First this Rangar, next a sweeper hag. What follows? What bring you next? Go, fetch the street dogs in!"

"Highness, she is useful, and costs nothing but the measure or two of meal she eats."

"A horse eats little more!" the angry Prince retorted, perfectly accustomed to being argued with by his own servants. That is the time-honored custom of the East. Obedience is one thing, argument another. Both in their way are good, and both have their innings. "Bring her to me— Nay! Keep her at a decent distance—so! Am I dirt for her broom?"

He sat and scowled at her, and the old woman tried to hide more of her protruding bones under the rag of clothing that she wore. She stood, wriggling in evident embarrassment, well out in the sun.

"What wilt thou steal of mine?" the Prince demanded suddenly.

"I am no thief."

Bright, beady eyes gleamed back at him, and gave the lie direct to her shrinking attitude of fear. But he had taken too much opium overnight, and was in no mood to notice little distinctions. He was satisfied that she should seem properly afraid of him, and he scowled angrily when one of his retainers, in slovenly undress, crossed the courtyard to him. The man's evident intention, made obvious by his manner and his leer at the old woman, was to say something against her; the Prince was in a mood to quarrel with any one, on any ground at all, who did not cower to him.

"Prince, she it is who ran ever with the white woman, as a dog runs in the dust."

"What does she here, then?"

"Ask her!" grinned the trooper. "Unless she comes to look for Ali Partab, I know not."

He made the last part of his remark in a hurried undertone, too low for the old woman to hear.

"Let her earn her meal around the stables," said the Prince. A sudden light dawned on him. Here was a means at least

of trying to make use of Ali Partab. "Go! do thy sweeping!" he commanded, and the hag slunk off.



FOR ten minutes longer, Jaimihr sat still and flicked at the stone column with his whip; then he sent for his Master of the Horse, whose mistaken sense of loyalty had been the direct cause of Ali Partab's capture. He had acted instantly when the fat Hindu brought him word, and he had expected to be praised for quick decision and rewarded; he was plainly in high dudgeon as he swaggered out of a dark door near the stables and advanced sulkily toward his master.

"Remove the prisoner from that cell, taking great care that the hag yonder sees what you do—yes, that hag, the new one; she is a spy. Bring the prisoner in to me, where I will talk with him. Afterward, place him in a different cell. Put him where we kept the bear that died. There is a dark corner beside it, where a man might hide. Hide a man there when it grows dark. And give the hag access. Say nothing to her; let her come and go as she will; watch, and listen."

Without another word, the Prince got up and shuffled in his decorated slippers to a door at one end of the cloister. Five minutes later, Ali Partab, high-chinned, but looking miserable, was led between two men through the same door, while the old woman went on very ostentatiously with her sweeping about the yard. She even turned her back, to prove how little she was interested.

Ali Partab was hustled forward into a high-ceilinged room, whose light filtered through a scrollwork mesh of chiseled stone where the wall and ceiling joined. There were no windows, but six doors opened from it, and every one of them was barred, as if they opened into treasure vaults. The Prince sat restlessly in a high, carved, wooden chair. There was no other furniture at all, and Ali Partab was left standing between his guards. The Prince drew a pistol from inside his clothing.

"Leave us alone!" he ordered; and the guards went out, closing the door behind them.

"I gave no orders for your capture," said Jaimihr with a smile.

"Then let me go," grinned Ali Partab.

"First I must be informed on certain matters."

Ali Partab still grinned, but the muscles of his face changed their position slightly, and it took no expert in physiognomy to read that questions he would answer must be very tactfully asked.

"Ask on!" said Ali Partab.

"You are Mohammed Gunga's man?"

"Yes. It is an honorable service."

"Did he order you to stay here?"

"Here—in this palace? Allah forbid!"

"Did he order you to stay in Howrah?"

"He gave me certain orders. I obeyed them, until your men invited swift death for themselves and you by interfering with me!"

"What were the orders?"

Ali Partab grinned again—this time insolently.

"To make sure that the Jaimihr sahib did not make away with the treasure of his brother Howrah!" he answered.

"If you were released, now, what would you proceed to do?"

"To obey my orders."

Jaimihr changed his tactics, and assumed the frequently successful legal line of pretending to know far more than he really did.

"I am told, by one who overheard you speak, that you were to take the missionary and his daughter to Alwa's place. How much is my brother Howrah paying for Mohammed Gunga's services in this matter? It is well known that he and Alwa between them could call out all the Rangars in the District for whichever side they chose. Since they are not on my side, they must be for Howrah. How much does he pay? I might offer more."

"I know not," said Ali Partab, perfectly ready to admit anything that was not true.

"It is true, then, that Howrah has designs on the missionary's daughter? Alwa is to keep her prisoner until the great blow is struck, and Howrah dare take possession of her?"

"That is not my business," answered Ali Partab, with the air of a man who knew all of the secret details but would not admit it. Jaimihr began to think that he had lit at random on the answer to the riddle.

"Where is Mohammed Gunga?"

"I know not."

"At Alwa's place?"

"Am I God, that I should know where any man is whom I can not see?"

"Oh. So he is at Alwa's, eh?"

That overdose of opium had rendered

Jaimihr's brain very dull indeed. He considered himself clever, and overlooked the fact that Ali Partab would be almost surely lying to him. In India men never tell the truth to chance-met strangers or to their enemies; the truth is a valuable thing, to be shared cautiously among friends.



"IF MOHAMMED GUNGA is at Alwa's," reasoned Jaimihr, "then he is much too close at hand to take any chances with. I must keep this man close confined."

He raised his voice in a high-pitched command, and the guards opened the door instantly. At a sign from the Prince, they seized Ali Partab by the wrists.

"I will send a message to Mohammed Gunga for thee," said Jaimihr. "On his answer will depend thy release or otherwise."

He nodded. The guards took their prisoner out between them, led him past the wrinkled old woman in the courtyard, and halted him in a far corner, where an evil-smelling cage of a place stood opened to receive him. A moment later, in order to make sure, the Master of the Horse sent for the old woman and made her sweep out the cell a little; then he drove her away, with a fierce injunction not to let herself be caught anywhere near the cell again unless ordered. Following the line of Eastern reasoning, had he not given that order he would not have known what her object could be should she make her way toward the cell; but now, if she risked his wrath by disobeying, he would know beyond the least shadow of a doubt that she had a message to deliver to the prisoner; the man who was hidden in the dark corner need entertain no hope of keeping the secret to himself for purposes of sale or blackmail! They trust each other wonderfully, with an almost childlike confidence, in a *ménage* such as Jaimihr's!

CHAPTER XV

Hol I am a King. All lesser fry
Must cringe and crawl and cry to me,
And none have any rights but I—
Except the right to lie to me.

T. M.

JAIMIHR was not the only man who would have dearly liked to know of the whereabouts of Mohammed Gunga. It had been reported to Maharaja Howrah by his

spies that the redoubtable ex-Rissaldar of horse had visited his relatives in Howrah City, and though he had not been able to ascertain a word of what had passed, he was none the less anxious.

The Maharaja knew, of course, for every soul in Howrah knew, that Jaimihr was plotting for the throne. He knew, too, that the priests of Siva, who with himself were joint keepers of the wickedly won tax-swollen treasure, had sounded Jaimihr; they had tentatively hinted that they might espouse his cause, provided that an equitable division of the treasure were arranged beforehand. The question uppermost in Maharaja Howrah's mind was whether the Rangars—the Moslem descendants of once Hindu Rajputs, who formed such a small but valuable proportion of the local population—could or could not be induced to throw in their lot with him.

No man on the whole tax-ridden countryside believed, or considered it as a distant possibility, that the Rangars would strive for any hand except their own. They were known, on the other hand, to be more or less cohesive, and it was considered certain that whichever way they swung when the priest-pulled string let loose the flood of revolution, they would swing all together. The question, then, was how to win the favor of the Rangars. It was not at all an easy question, for the love lost between Hindus and Mohammedans is less than that between dark-skinned men and white—a lot less.

Within two hours of its happening, he had been told of the capture of Ali Partab; and he knew, for that was another thing his spies had told him, that Ali Partab was Mohammed Gunga's man. Apparently, then, Ali Partab, a prisoner in Jaimihr's palace yard, was the only connecting link between him and the Rangars whom he wished to win over to his side. He was anxious as any to help overwhelm the British, but he naturally wished to come out of the turmoil high and dry himself, and he was therefore ready to consider the protection of individual British subjects, if that would please the Rangars.

Mohammed Gunga was known to have carried letters for the missionaries. He was known to have engaged a new servant when he rode away from Howrah, and to have left his trusted man behind. Miss McClean was known to have conversed with the re-

tainer, immediately after which the man had been seized and carried off by Jaimihr's men. Jaimihr was known to have placed watchers around the mission house, and, once, to have killed a man in Miss McClean's defense. The deduction was not too far-fetched that the retainer had been left as a protection against Jaimihr, and consequently that the Rangars, at the behest of Mohammed Gunga, had decided on at least the white girl's safety.

Therefore, he argued, if he now proceeded to protect the McCleans, he would at all events not incur the Rangars' enmity.

It was a serious decision that he had to make. For one thing, he dared not yet make any move likely to incite his strongly supported brother to open rebellion; he dared not, therefore, interfere at present with the watchers near the mission house. Openly to befriend the Christian priests would be to set the whole Hindu population against himself, for it had been mainly against suttee and its kindred horrors that the missionaries had bent all their energy.



THE great palace of Howrah was ahum. Elephants, with painted tusks and loaded to the groaning-point under *howdahs* decked with jewels and gold leaf, came and went through the carved entrance gates. Occasionally camels, loaded too until their legs all but buckled underneath them, strutted with their weird mixed air of foolishness and dignity, to be disburdened of great cases that eight men could scarcely lift. On the outside the cases were marked "Hardware," but a horde of armed and waiting malcontents scattered about the countryside could have given a more detailed and accurate guess at what was in them.

Men came and went—men of almost all castes, and many nationalities. Priests—not all of them fat, but every single one fat-smiling—sunned themselves, or waited in the shade until they could have audience; no priest of any Hindu temple had to wait long to be admitted to that Raja's presence, and there was an everlasting chain of them, each with his ax to grind, coming and going by day and night.

Color rioted in the blazing sun, and deep, dark shadows lurked in all the thousand places where the sun could never penetrate. It was India in essence—noise and blaze and flouted splendor, with a back-

ground and underground of mystery. Any but the purblind British could have told at half a glance, merely by the attitude of Howrah's armed sepoys, that a concerted movement of some kind was afoot, that there was a tight-held thread of plan running through the whole confusion. But no man, not even a native, could have guessed what secret plotting might be going on within the acres of the straggling palace.

From the courtyard, there was no least hint obtainable even of the building's size; its shape could have been marked down only from a bird's-eye view aloft. Even the roof was so uneven, and so subdivided by traced and deep-carved walls and ramparts that a sentry posted at one end could not have seen the next man to him, perhaps some twenty feet away. Building had been piled on building, other buildings had been added end to end and crisscrosswise, and each extension had been walled in as new centuries saw new additions, until the many acres were a maze of bricks and stone and fountain-decorated gardens that no lifelong palace denizen could have learned to know in their entirety.

Within, one story up above the courtyard din, in a spacious, richly decorated room that gave on to a gorgeous roof garden, the Maharaja sat and let himself be fanned by women, who were purchasable for perhaps a tenth of what any of the fans had cost. Another woman, younger than the rest, played wild minor music to him on an instrument not much unlike a flute; they were melancholy notes, beautiful, but sad enough to sow pessimism's seed in any one who listened.

His divan, carved, inlaid, and gilded, faced the wide, awning-hung opening to the garden. Round him on all three sides was a carved stone screen, through the interstices of which came rustlings and whisperings that told of the hidden life which sees and is not seen. The women with the fans and flute were mere court accessories. The real nerves of Asia, the veiled intriguers, whom none may know but whose secret power any man may feel, could be heard like caged birds crowding on their perches.

Now and then glass bracelets tinkled from behind the screen; ever and again the music stopped, until another girl appeared, to play another melancholy air. But the even purring of the fans went on incessantly, and the poor priest-ridden fool who

owned it all scowled straight in front of him, his brows lined deep in thought.

It is a strange malady, that, which seizes men whom Fate has elevated to a throne. It acts as certain Indian drugs are known to do, depriving its victim of the power to act, but intensifying his ability to think, and theorize, and feel. Howrah, with untold treasure in his vaults, with an army of five thousand men, with the authority and backing that a hundred generations give, could long for more, could fear the loss of what he did have, but could not act.

The priests held him fearbound. His brother held him hatebound. His women—and not even he knew, probably, how many of them languished in the secret warren inside those palace walls—kept him restless in a net of this-and-that-way-tugged intrigue. Flattery—and that is by far the subtlest poison of the East—blinded him utterly to his own best course, and kept him blind. Luxury unmanned him; he who had once held the straightest spear in Western India, and for the love of feeling red blood racing in his veins had ridden down panthers on the *maidan*, was flabby now. Deep, dark rings underlined his eyes, and the once steel-sinewed wrist trembled.

His brother Jaimihr in his place, unsapped yet by decadent delights, would have loosed his five thousand on the countryside, butchered any who opposed him, pressed into service those who merely lagged, and would have plunged India in a welter of blood, before the priests had time to mature their plans and arrange to keep all the power and plunder to themselves. But Jaimihr had to stalk lesser game, and content himself with pricking at the ever growing hate that gradually rendered the Maharaja decisionless, and sorry only for himself.



A FIRST glimpse at Howrah, particularly in the shaded room, showed a handsome man, black-bearded, lean, and lithe. A second look, undazzled by his jewelry or by the studied magnificence of each apparently unstudied movement, betrayed a man whose lightest word was law, but who feared to give the word. Where muscles had been were unfilled folds of skin that shook; where a firm, if selfish, mouth had once smiled merrily beneath a pointed black mustache, a mouth still smiled, but meanly. The selfishness was there, but the firmness had faded.

His eyes, though, were his most marked feature. They were hungry eyes, pathetic as a caged beast's, and as savage. No one could see them without pitying him, and no man in his senses would have accepted their owner's word on any point at all. A man looks as the Majaraja did when the fire of a burning *veld* has circled him, and there is no way out. There was fear behind them, and the look of restless search for safety that is nowhere.

In one of the many columned courtyards of the palace was a chained mad elephant, whose duty was to kneel on the Raja's captive enemies. In another courtyard was a big square tank, with a weedy, slippery stone ramp at one end. In the tank were alligators. Down the ramp other of the Raja's enemies, tight-bound, would scream and struggle and slide from time to time. But, they were only little enemies who died in that way; the greater ones, who had power or influence, lived on and plotted, because the owner of the execution beasts was too afraid to put them to their use.

Below, in damp, unlit dungeons, there were silken cords suspended from stone ceilings. Their ends were noosed, and the nooses hung ten feet above the floor. Those told only, though, of the fate of women who had schemed unwisely—favorites of a week, perhaps, who had dared to sulk; listeners through screens, who had forgotten to forget. No men died ever by the silken cord, and no tales ever reached the outside world of those who did die, down in the echoing brick cellars—there was a path that led underground to the alligator tank, and a trap door that opened just above the water edge. Night, and the fungus-fouled long jaws, and slimy, weed-filled water—the creak of rusty hinges—a splash—the bang of a falling trap—a swirl in the moonlit water, and ring after heavy, widening ring that lapped at last against the stone would write conclusion to a tragedy. There would be no record kept.

Howrah was childless. That, of all the demon-sent troubles that beset him, was the worst. That alone was worse than the hoarded treasure, whose secret he and his brother and the priests of Siva shared.

Only in India could it happen that a line of Rajas, dragnet-armed—oblivious to the duties of a King, and greedy only of the royal right to tax—could pile up, century by century, a hoard of gold and jewels—to

be looked at. The secret of that treasure made the throne worth plotting for, gave the priests, who shared the secret, more than nine-tenths of their power for blackmail, pressure, and intrigue, and grew, like a cancer, into each succeeding Raja's mind until, from a man with a soul inside him, he became in turn a heartless, fear-ridden miser.

Any childless king is likely to feel the insolent expectancy betrayed by the heir apparent. But Jaimihr—who had no sons either—was an heir who understood all of the Indian arts whereby a man of brain may hasten the succession. Worry, artfully stirred up, is the greatest weapon of them all, and never a day passed but some cleverly concocted tale would reach the Raja calculated to set his guessing faculties at work.

Either of the brothers, when he happened to be thirsty, would call his least trusted counselor to drink first from the jeweled cup, and would watch the man afterward for at least ten minutes before daring to slake his thirst. But Jaimihr had the moral advantage of an aspirant. Howrah, on the defensive, wilted under the nibbling necessity for wakefulness, while Jaimihr grinned.



WHAT were five thousand drilled, armed men to a Raja who feared to use them? Of what use was a waiting countryside, armed if not drilled, if he was not sure that his brother had not won every man's allegiance? Being Hindu, priest-reared, priest-fooled, and priest-flattered, he knew or thought he knew to an anna the value he might set on Hindu loyalty, or on the loyalty of any man who did not stand to gain in pocket by remaining true; and as many another fear-sick tyrant has begun to do, he turned, in his mind at least, to men of another creed—which in India means of another race practically—wondering whether he could not make use of them against his own.

As every other Raja of his line had done, he longed to have sole control of that wonderful treasure that had eaten out his very manhood. Miser though he was, he was prepared at least to bargain with outsiders with the promise of a portion of it, if that would give him possession of it all. He had learned from the priests who took such full advantage of him an absolute contempt for Mohammedans; and their teaching, as

well as his own trend of character, made him quite indifferent to promises he might make for the sake of diplomacy to men of another creed. It began to be obvious to him that he would lose nothing by courting the favor of the Rangars, and of Alwa in particular, and that he might win security by coaxing them to take his part. Of one thing he was certain; the Rangars would do anything at all, if by doing it they could harm the Hindu priests.

But, being of the East Eastern, and at that Hindu, he could not have brought himself to make overtures direct and go straight to the real issue. He had to feel his way gingerly. The thousand horses in his stables, he reflected, would mount a thousand of the Rangars and place at his disposal a regiment of cavalry which would be difficult to beat; but a thousand mounted Rangars might be a worse thorn in his side than even in those of his brother or the priests. He decided to write to Alwa, but to open negotiations with a very thin and delicately inserted wedge.

He could write. The priests had overlooked that opportunity, and had taught him in his boyhood; in that one thing he was their equal. But the other things that they had taught him, too, offset his penmanship. He was too proud to write, too lazy, too enamored of his dignity. He called a court official, and the man sat very humbly at his feet, listened meekly to the stern command to secrecy, and took the letter from dictation.

Alwa was informed, quite briefly, that in view of certain happenings in Howrah City his Highness the Maharaja had considered it expedient to set a guard over the Christian missionaries in the City, for their safety. The accompanying horse was a gift to the Alwa sahib. The Alwa sahib himself would be a welcome guest whenever he might care to come.

The document was placed in a silver tube and sealed. Within the space of half an hour a horseman was kicking up the desert dust, riding as if he carried news of life-and-death importance, and with another man and a led horse galloping behind him. Five minutes after the man had started, in a cell below the temple of Siva, the court official who had taken down the letter was repeating it word for word to a congeries of priests. And, one hour later still, in a room up near the roof of Jaimihr's

palace, one of the priests, panting from having come so fast, was asking the Raja's brother what he thought about it.

"Did he say nothing?" asked Jaimihr.

"Nothing, sahib."

The priest watched him eagerly; he would have to bear back to the other priests an exact account of the Prince's every word and movement, and expression.

"Then I too say nothing!" answered Jaimihr.

"But, to the priests of Siva, who are waiting, sahib?"

"Tell them I said nothing!"

CHAPTER XVI

Eyes in the dark, awake and keen,
See and may not themselves be seen;
But—and this is the tale I tell—
What if the dark has eyes as well? T. M.

BESIDE the reeking bear's cage in which Ali Partab stood and swore was a dark, low corner space in which at one time and another sacks and useless impedimenta had been tossed, to become rat-eaten and decayed. In among all the rubbish, crosslegged like the idol of the underworld, a nearly naked Hindu sat, prick-eared. He was quite invisible long before the sun went down, for that was the dingiest corner of the yard. When twilight came, he could not have been seen from a yard away.

Joanna, sweeping, sweeping, sweeping in the courtyard, with her back very nearly always turned toward the cage, appeared to take no notice of the falling darkness. Unlike the other menials, who hurried to their rest and evening meal, she went on working, accomplishing very little but seeming to be very much in earnest about it all. Very, very gradually she drew nearer to the cage. When night fell, she was within ten feet of it. A few lamps were lit, then, here and there over doorways, but nobody appeared to linger in the courtyard; no footfalls resounded; nothing but the neigh of stabled horses and the chatter around the big, flat supper pans broke on the evening quiet.

Joanna drew nearer. Ali Partab came forward to the cage bars, but said nothing. It was very dark inside the cage, and even the sharp-eyed old woman could not possibly have seen his gestures. When he stood tight-pressed against the bars, she might have made out his dark shape dimly, but

unless he chose to speak no signal could possibly have passed from him to her. He said nothing, though, and she, still sweeping, with her back toward him, passed by the cage, and stooped to scratch at some hard-caked dirt or other close to the rubbish hole where the Hindu waited. Still scratching, still working with her twig broom, still with her back toward the rubbish hole, she approached until the darkest shadow swallowed her.

There were two in the dark, then—she and the man who listened. He, motionless as stone, had watched her, peering outward at the lesser darkness. He lost sight of her for a second, as she backed into the deepest shadow unexpectedly. Before he could become accustomed to the altered focus and the deeper black, her beady eyes picked out the whites of his. Before he could move she was on him—at his throat, clenching it with thin, steel fingers. Before he could utter a sound, or move, she had drawn a short knife from her clothing, and had driven it to the hilt below his ear. He dropped without a gurgle, and without a sound she gathered up her broom again, and swept her way back past the cage bars, where Ali Partab waited.

"Was any there?" he whispered.

"There was one."

"And?"

"He was."

"Good! Now will the reward be three mohurs, instead of two!"

"Where are they?"

"These pigs have taken all the money from me. Now we must wait until Mohammed Gunga sahib comes. His word is pledged."

"He said two mohurs."

"I, Ali Partab, pledge his word for three."

"And who art thou? The bear in the cage said 'I will eat thee, if I get outside!'"

"Mother of corruption! Listen! Alwa must know! Canst thou escape from here? Canst thou reach the Alwa sahib?"

"If the price were four mohurs, there might be many things that I could do."

"The price is three. I have spoken."

"I would eat honey, were I outside! said the bear."

"Hag! The bear died in the cage, and they sold his pelt for how much? Alive he had been worth three mohurs, but he died while they bargained for him. Quick!"

"I am black, sahib, and the night is

black. I am old, and none would believe me active. They watch the gates, but the bats fly in and out."

"Find out, then, what has happened to my horses, left at the caravansary; give that information to the Alwa sahib. Tell the Miss sahib at the mission where I am. Tell her whither I have sent thee. Tell the Alwa sahib that a Rangar, by name Ali Partab, sworn follower of the Prophet and servant of the Rissaldar Mohammed Gunga, is in need, and asks his instant aid. Say also to the Alwa sahib that it may be well to rescue the Miss sahib first, before he looks for me, but that of that matter I am no judge, being imprisoned and unable to ascertain the truth. Hast thou understood?"

"And all that for three mohurs?"

"Nay. The price is now two mohurs again. It will be one, unless——"

"Three, sahib! It was three!"

"Then run! Hasten!"



THE shadows swallowed her again.

She crept where they were darkest, lay still once, breathless, while a man walked almost over her, reached the outer wall, and felt her way along it until she came to low eaves, that reached down like a jagged saw from utter blackness. Less than a minute later she was crawling monkey-wise along a roof. Before another five had passed, she had dropped on all fours in the dust of the outer road, and was running like a black ghost, head down, an end of her loin cloth between her teeth, one arm clenched tight to her side, and the other crooked outward, swinging, striding, panting, boring through the blackness.

She wasted little time at the caravansary. The gate was shut, and a sleepy watchman cursed her for breaking into his reverie.

"Horses? Belonging to a Rangar? Fool! Does not the Maharaja sahib impound all horses left ownerless? Ask them back of him that took them! Go, night owl! Go ask him!"

Almost as quickly as a native pony could have eaten up the distance, she dropped panting on the doorstep of the little mission house. She was panting, now, from fright as well as sheer exhaustion. There were watchers—two sets of them. One man stood with his back turned within ten paces of her, and another, less than two yards away from him, stood turned half

sidewise, looking up the street and whistling to himself. There was not a corner or an angle of the little place that was not guarded.

She had tried the back door first, but that was locked and she had rapped on it gently until she remembered that of evenings the missionary and his daughter occupied the front room always, and that they would not have heard her had she hammered. She tapped now, very gently, with her fingers on the lower panel of the door, quaking and trembling in every limb, but taking care to make her little noise unevenly, in a way that would be certain to attract attention inside.

Tap-tap-tap. Pause. Tap-tap. Pause. Tap-tap-tap-tap. Pause. Tap-tap.

The door opened suddenly. Both watchers turned, and gazed straight into the lamplight that streamed out past the tall form of Duncan McClean. He stared at them and they stared back again. Joanna slunk into the deep shadow at one side of the steps.

"Is it necessary for you to annoy me by rapping on my door, as well as by spying on me?" asked the missionary in a tone of weary remonstrance.

The guards laughed, and looked away again, to consummate their insolence. In that second Joanna shot like a black spirit of the night straight past the missionary's legs, and collapsed in a bundle on the floor behind him.

"Shut the door, sahib!" she hissed at him. "Quick! Shut the door!"

He shut it and bolted it, half recognizing something in the voice, or else guided by instinct.

"Joanna!" he exclaimed, holding up a lamp above her. "You, Joanna!"

At the name, Rosemary McClean came running out, looked for an instant, and then knelt by the old woman.

"Father, bring water, please, quickly!"

The missionary went in search of a water-jar, and Rosemary McClean bent down above the ancient, shriveled, sorry-looking mummy of a woman, drew the wrinkled head into her lap, stroked the drawn face, and wept over her. The spent, age-weakened, dried-out widow had fainted; there was no wakened self-consciousness of black and white to interfere. This was a friend—one lone friend of her own sex amid all the waste of smoldering hate; some one surely to be wept over, and made much of

and caressed. The poor old hag recovered consciousness with her head pillowed on a European lap, and Duncan McClean, no stickler for convention, and no believer in a line too tightly drawn, saw fit to remonstrate, as he laid the jar of water down beside them.

"Why," she answered, looking up at him, "father, I'd have kissed a *dog* that got lost, and came back again like this!"



THEY picked her up between them, after they had let her drink, and carried her between them to the long, low sitting-room, where she told them, after considerable make-believe of being more spent than she really was, after about a tenth "sip" at the brandy flask, and when another had been laughingly refused, all about Ali Partab, and what his orders to her were.

"I wonder what it all can mean?"

McClean sat back and tried to summarize his experiences of months, and fit them in to what Joanna said.

"What does *that* mean?" asked his daughter, leaning forward. She was staring at Joanna's forearm, and from that to a dull red patch on the woman's loin cloth. Joanna answered nothing.

"Are you wounded, Joanna? Are you sure? That's blood! Look here, father!"

He agreed that it was blood. It was dry, and it came off her forearm in little flakes when he rubbed it. But not a word could they coax out of Joanna to explain it, until Rosemary, drawing the old woman to her, espied the handle of her knife, projecting by an inch above the waist fold of her cloth. Too late Joanna tried to hide it; Rosemary held her, and drew it out. Beyond any shadow of a doubt there was blood on the blade still, and on the wooden hilt, and caked in the clumsy joint between the hilt and blade.

"Joanna, have you killed any one?"

Joanna shook her head.

"Tell me the truth, Joanna. Whose blood is that?"

"A dog's, Miss sahib. A street dog attacked me as I ran hither."

"I wish I could believe it!"

"I too!" said her father, and he took Joanna to one side and cross-examined her. But he could get no admission from her, nothing but the same statement, with added details each time he made her tell it, that she had killed a dog.

They fed her, and she ate like a hyena. No caste prejudices or forbidden foods troubled her; she ate whatever came her way, Hindu food, or Mohammedan, or Christian, and reached for more—and finished, as hyenas finish, by breaking bones to get the marrow out. At midnight they left her, curled dog-wise on a mat in the hall to sleep; and at dawn, when they came to wake her, she was gone again—gone utterly, without a trace or sign of explanation. The doors, both front and back, were locked.

It was four days later when they found a hole, torn through the thatch, through which she had escaped; and though they searched the house from cellar up to roof, and turned all their small possessions over, they could not find—and they were utterly glad of it—that she had stolen anything.

"Thank God for that!" said McClean.

"I've finished disbelieving in Joanna!" said his daughter, with a grimace that in her case went always with irrevocable decision.

"I've come to the conclusion," said McClean, "that there are more than just Joanna to be trusted. There is Ali Partab, and—who knows how many?"

CHAPTER XVII

Against all fear; against the weight of what,
For lack of worse name, men miscall the Law;
Against the Tyranny of Creed; against the hot,
Foul Creed of priest, and Superstition's maw;
Against all man-made Shackles, and a man-made
Hell—
Alone—at last—unaided—I *REBEL!*

T. M.

NO SINGLE, individual circumstance, but a chain of happenings in very quick succession brought about a climax, forcing the hand of Howrah and his brother and for the moment drawing the McCleans, father and daughter, into the toothed wheel of Indian action. As usual in India, the usual brought about the unexpected, and the unexpected fitted strangely into the complex, mysteriously worked-out whole.

Four days after Joanna left the mission house, through a made hole in the thatch, the spirit of revolt took hold of Rosemary McClean again. The stuffy, narrow quarters; the insolent, doubled, unexplained, but very obvious, guard that lounged outside; the sense of rank injustice and helplessness; the weird feeling of impending horror added on to stale-grown ghastliness;

youth, chafing at the lack of liberty—all stirred her to action.

Without a word to her father, who was writing reports that seemed endless at the little desk by the shaded window, she left the house, drew with a physical effort on all her reserve of strength and health, faced the scorching afternoon wind as if it were a foe that could shrink away before her courage, and walked, since she had no pony now, in any direction in which chance or her momentary whim might lead her.

"I won't cry again, and I won't submit, and I'll just see what happens!" she told herself; and the four who followed her at a none-too-respectful distance—two of the Maharaja's men in uniform, and two shabby-looking ruffians of Jaimihr's—grinned as they scented action. Like their masters, they bore no love for one another; they were there, now, in fact as much to watch one another as the missionaries; they detected the possibility of an excuse to be at one another's throats, and gloated as they saw two messengers, one of each side, run off in a hurry to inform the rival camps.

It was neither plan nor conscious selection that led Rosemary McClean toward the far end of the *maidan*, where the sluggish, narrow, winding Howrah River sucked slimily beside the burning-ghats. When she realized where her footsteps were leading her she would have turned in horror and retreated, for even a legitimately roasting corpse that died before the Hindu priests had opportunity to introduce it to the flames is no sight for eyes that are civilized.

But when she turned her head, the sight of her hurrying escort perspiring in her wake—few natives like the heat and wind one whit better than their conquerors—filled her with an unexpected, probably unjustifiable, determination not to let them see her flinch at any kind of horror. That was the spirit of *sahibdom*, that is not always quite commendable; it is the spirit that takes Anglo-Saxon women to the seething, stenchy plains and holds them there high-chinned to stiffen their menfolk by courageous example, but it leads, too, to things not quite so womanly and good.

"I'll show them!" muttered Rosemary McClean, wiping the blown dust from her eyes, and facing the wind again that now began to carry with it the unspread taint, the awful, sickening, soul-revolting smell inseparable from Hindu funeral rites. There

were three pyres, low-smoldering, close by the River bank, and men stirred with long poles among the ashes to make sure that the incineration started the evening before should be complete. There was one pyre that looked as if it had been lit long after dawn, there was another newly lit, and there were two pyres building.



IT WAS those two new ones that held her attention, and finally decided her to hold her course. She wanted to make sure. The smell of burning, the unoutlined, only guessed-at ghastliness, would probably have killed her courage yet, before she came close enough really to see; but the suspicion of a greater horror drew her on, as snakes are said to draw birds on, by merely being snakes, and with red-rimmed eyes smarting from smoke as well as wind she pressed forward.

The ghats were deserted-looking, for the funeral rites of those who burned were practically over until the time should come to scatter ashes on the River surface; only a few attendants hovered close to the fires, to prod them and occasionally throw on extra logs. Only around the two new-building pyres was anything approaching a crowd assembled, and there a priest was officiously directing the laying of the logs. It was the manner of their laying, and the careful building of a scaffold on each side of either pyre that held Rosemary McClean's attention, called all the rebellious womanhood within her to interfere, and drew her nearer.

Soon the priest noticed her, a cotton-skirted wraith amid the smoke, and shouted to the guards behind. One of them answered, laughing coarsely. Rosemary understood enough of the dialect he used to grit her teeth with shame and anger. The men left off building, and, directed by the priest, came toward her in a ragged line to cut her off from closer approach. She stood, then, examined the new pyres as carefully as she could, walked to another vantage point and viewed them sidewise; then turned her back.

"Oh, the brutes!" she ejaculated. There were tears in her voice, as well as helpless anger. "There is not one Devil; there are a million, and they all live here!"

She looked back again once, trembling with an overmastering hate, directed less at the priest who grinned back at her than at the loathsome rite he represented. In two

actual English words, she cursed him. It was the first time she had ever cursed anybody in her life, and the wickedness of doing it swept over her as a relief. She revealed in it. She was glad she had cursed him. Her little, light, graceful body, that had been quivering, grew calm again, and she turned to hurry home with an unexpected sense of having pulled some lever in the mechanism that would bring about results. She neither knew nor cared what results, nor how they were to happen; she felt that that curse of hers, her first, had landed on the mark!

But she had come further than she thought. Distance, hot wind, and emotion had exhausted her far more, too, than she had had time to realize. Before a mile of the homeward journey had been accomplished, she was forced against her stubborn Scots will to sit down on a big stone by the roadside and rest, while the four that followed came up close, and passed remarks in anything but undertones, grinning meaningly. A little crowd of stragglers drew together near the four, laughed with them, took sides in the coarse-worded argument about Jaimihr's known ambition, and shamed her into pressing on homeward.

But she was forced to rest again, and then again. She felt physically sick, which prevented her from obeying instinct, reason, will, which all three urged her on. No false pride now told her to dare the insolence of the guards; nothing appealed to her but the desire to hurry, hurry, hurry, and do whatever should appear to need doing when she reached the mission house. She had no plan in her head. She knew only that she had cursed a man, and that the curse was potent. But her feet dragged, and her vitality died down. It was sundown when she reached the mission house, and she could hear the rising, falling, intermittent din of drums before she saw her father in the doorway.



"FATHER!"

She ran to him, and he caught her in his arms to save her from falling headlong. "Father, there is going to be a suttee to-night! Hear the drums, father! Hear the drums! It'll be to-night! That's to stop the screams from being heard! Listen to them, father. Two suttees, side by side—I've seen the pyres

and the scaffolds. Do they jump into the flames, father, from the scaffolds? Tell me! No—don't tell me; I won't listen! Take me away from here—away—away—away! Take me away, d'you hear!"

He carried her inside, and laid her on the caned couch in the living-room, looking like a great, big, helpless, gray-haired baby, as any man is prone to do when he has hysteria to deal with in a woman whom he loves.

"I cursed a man, father! I cursed a man! I did! I said, 'Damn you!' I'm glad! Oh——"

"Don't, little girl—don't! Lassie mine, don't! Never mind what you saw or what you said. Be calm now. There is something we must do. We must act; I have determined we must act. We must act to-night. But we can't do anything with you in this state."

Slowly, gradually he calmed her—or probably she grew calm in spite of his attentions, for he was too upset himself to exercise much soothing sway over anybody else. At last, though, she fell into a fitful sleep, and he sat beside her, holding rigid the left hand that she clutched, letting it stiffen and grow cold and numb for fear of waking her.

Outside, a full moon rose majestically, pure and silvery as Peace herself, bathing the universe in blessings. And, each month when the full moon rose above the carved dome of Siva's temple, there was a ceremony gone through that commemorated cruelty, greed, poisoning, throat-slitting, hate, and all the infamy that suckles, always, at the breast of stagnant treasure.

Since history has forgotten when, at each full moon the priests of Siva went with circumstantial ceremony to view the hoarded wealth, tied up by jealousy and guarded jealously in Howrah's palace. With them, as the custom that was stronger than a thousand laws dictated, went the Maharaja and his brother Jaimihr—joint owners with the priests.

There had not been one Maharaja since the first of that long line, who would not have given the lives of ten thousand men for leave to broach that treasure; nor, since the first heir apparent shared the secret with the priests and the holder of the throne, had there been one Prince in line—son, brother, cousin—who would not have drenched the throne with his relation's blood with that same purpose.

Heir after heir could have agreed with the Maharaja, but the priests had stood between. That treasure was their fulcrum. The legacy, dictated by a dead, misguided hand, intended as a war reserve to stay the throne of Howrah in its need and trebly locked to guard against profligacy, had placed the priests of Siva in the position of dictators of Howrah's destiny. A word from them, and a Prince would slay his father—only to discover that the promises of Siva's priests were something less to build on than the hope of loot. There would be another heir apparent to be let into the secret—another man to scheme and hunger for the throne—another party to the bloody three-angled intrigue which kept the Siva servers fat and the Maharajas lean.

Past masters of the art by which superstitious ignorance is swayed, the priests could swing the allegiance of the mob whichever way they chose; even the soldiers, loyal enough to their masters under ordinary circumstances, would have rebelled, at a mere hint from holy Siva. It was the priests who made it possible for Jaimihr to dare take his part in the ceremony. Without them he would not have entered his brother's palace yard unless five thousand men, at least, were there to guard his back; but if there was danger where the priests were there was safety too.

As the custom was, he rode to the temple of Siva first with a ten-man guard. There, when the priests had finished droning age-old anthems to the echoing roof, when his brother the Maharaja, also with a ten-man guard, had joined him, and the two had submitted to the sanctifying rites prescribed, eleven priests would walk with them in solemn mummery to the palace entrance, censer-swinging, chanting, blasphemously acting duty to their gods and State.

The moon—and that, too, was custom—rested with her lower rim one full hand's breadth above the temple dome as viewed from the palace gate, when a gong clanged resonantly, and died to silence. Music of pipes and cymbals broke on the evening quiet—and the strange procession started from the temple door, the Maharaja leading.

Generally, it passed uninterrupted over the intervening street to the palace entrance, between the ranks of a salaaming, silent crowd, and disappeared from view.

This time, though, for the first time in living memory, and possibly for the first time in all history, the unforeseen amazing happened. The procession stopped. Moonbathed between the carved posts of the palace gate, two people blocked the way.

 THE music ceased. The sudden silence framed itself against the distant thunder of a hundred drums. The crowd—all heads bowed, as decreed—drew in its breath and held it. A sea of pugrees moved, as brown eyes looked up surreptitiously, stared, memorized, and then looked down again. There was no precedent for this happening. Even the Maharaja and the priests were at a momentary loss, stood waiting, staring—and said nothing.

"Maharaja sahib! I must interrupt your ceremony. I must have word with you at once!"

It was Duncan McClean, bareheaded, holding his daughter's hand. They had no weapons; they were messengers of Peace protesting, or so they looked. Moonlight-bathed, no longer timid, but resigned to what might happen, they held each other's hands, and blocked the way of Siva's votaries, Siva's tools, and Siva's ritual.

Jaimihr whispered to the Maharaja—the first time he had dared one word to him in person for years. The High Priest of the temple pressed forward angrily, saying nothing, but trying to combine rage and dignity with an attempt to turn the incident to priestly advantage. Surely, this was a crisis out of which the priests *must* come triumphant. They held all the cards, knew how and when rebellion was timed, and could compare, as the principals themselves could not do, Howrah's strength with Jaimihr's. And the priests had the crowd to back them—the ignorant, superstitious crowd that can make or dethrone emperors.

But some strange freak of real dignity—curiosity perhaps, or possibly occasion-spurred desire to act of his own initiative and keep the High Priest in his place—impelled the Maharaja in that minute. Men said afterward that Jaimihr had whispered to him advice which he knew was barbed because it was his brother whispering, and that he promptly did the opposite; but, whatever the motive, he drew himself up in all his jeweled splendor, and demanded, "What do you people wish?"

No time was given the McCleans to

reply. The priests did not see fit to let the reins of this occasion slip; the word went out, panic-voiced, that sacrilege to Siva was afoot.

"Slay them! Slay them!" yelled the crowd. "They violate the sacred rites!"

There were no Mohammedans among that crowd, to take delight in seeing Hindu priests discomfited and Hindu ritual disturbed. There came no counter shout. The crowd did not, as so often happens, turn and rend itself; and yet, though a surge from behind pressed forward, the men in front pressed back.

"Slay them! Slay the sacrilegious foreigners!" The yell grew louder and more widely voiced, but no man in the front ranks moved.

The Maharaja looked from the company of guards that lined the palace steps to the priests, and his brother, and the crowd—and then to the McCleans again. He remembered Alwa and his Rangars, thought of the messenger whom he had sent, remembered that a regiment of lance-armed horsemen would be worth a risk or two to win over to his side—and made decision.

"You are in danger," he asserted, using a pronoun not intended to convey politeness, but—Eastern of the East—counter-acting that by courtesy of manner. "Do you ask my aid?"

"Yes, among other things," Duncan McClean answered him. "I wish also to speak about a Rangar, who I know is held prisoner in a cage in the Jaimihr sahib's palace."

"Speak of that later," answered Howrah.

He made a sign. A spoken word might have told the priests too much, and have set them busy forestalling him. The guards rushed down the steps, seized both McCleans, and half carried, half hustled them up the palace steps, through the great carved doors, and presently returned without them.

"They are my prisoners," said the Maharaja, turning to the High Priest. "We will now proceed."

The crowd was satisfied, at least for the time being. Well versed in the kind of treatment meted out to prisoners, partly informed of what was preparing for the British all through India, the crowd never doubted for an instant but that vengeance of a most appalling kind awaited the Christians who had dared to remonstrate against

time-honored custom. It looked, for the moment, as if the High Priest's word had moved the Maharaja to order the arrest, and the High Priest realized it. By skilful play, and well used dignity, he might contrive to snatch all the credit yet. He ordered; the pipes and cymbals started up again at once; and, one by one—Maharaja, Jaimihr, High Priest, then Maharaja's guard, Jaimihr's guard, priest again—the procession wound ahead, jeweled and aigretted, sabered and spurred, priest-robed, representative of all the many cancers eating at the heart of India.

Chanting, clanging, wailing minor dirges to the night, it circled all the front projections of the palace, turned where a small door opened on a courtyard at one side, entered, and disappeared.

CHAPTER XVIII

Oh, is it good, my Soldier Prince, and is the
wisdom clear,
To guard thy front a thousand strong, while
ten may take the rear?

T. M.

NOW, because it was impregnable to almost anything except a yet-to-be-invented airship, the Alwa sahib still owned a fortress, high-perched on a crag that overlooked a glittering expanse of desert. More precious than its bulk in diamonds, a spring of clear, cold water from the rock-lined depths of mother earth gushed out through a fissure near the summit, and round that spring had been built in bygone centuries a battlemented nest, to breed and turn out warriors. Alwa's grandfather had come by it, through complicated bargaining and dowry contracts, and Alma now held it as the rallying-point for the Rangars thereabouts.

But its defensibility was practically all the crag-fort had to offer by way of attraction. Down at its foot, where the stream of rushing water splashed in a series of cascades to the thirsty, sandy earth, there were an acre or two of cultivation—sufficient in time of peace to support an attenuated garrison and its horses. But for his revenues the Alwa sahib had to look many a long day's march afield. Leagues of desert lay between him and the nearest farm he owned, and since, more in the East than anywhere, a landlord's chief absorption is the watching of his rents, it followed that

he spent the greater part of his existence in the saddle, riding from one widely scattered tenant to another.

It was luck, or fortuitous circumstance—Fate, he would have called it, had he wasted time to give it name—that brought him along a road where, fifty miles from Howrah City, he caught sight of Joanna. Needless to say, he took no slightest notice of her.

Dog-weary, parched, sore-footed, she was hurrying along the burning, sandy trail that led in the direction of Alwa's fort. The trail was narrow, and the horsemen whose mounts ambled tirelessly behind Alwa's plain-bred Arab pressed on past him, to curse the hag and bid her make horse room for her betters. She sank on the sand and begged of them. Laughingly they asked her what a coin would buy in all that arid waste.

"Have the jackals, then, turned tradesmen?" they jeered; but she only mumbled, and displayed her swollen tongue, and held her hands in an attitude of pitiful supplication. Then Alwa cantered up, rode past, heard one of his men jeering, drew rein, and wheeled.

"Give her water!" he commanded. He sat and watched her, while she knelt face upward and a Rangar poured lukewarm water from a bottle down her tortured throat. He held it high, and let the water splash, for fear his dignity might suffer, should he or the bottle touch her. Strictly speaking, Rangars have no caste, but they retain by instinct and tradition many of the Hindu prejudices; Alwa himself saw nothing to object to in the man's precaution.

"Ask the old crows' meat whither she was running."

"She says she would find the Alwa sahib."

"Tell her I am he."

Joanna fawned, and laid her wrinkled forehead in the dust.

"Get up!" he growled. "Thy service is dishonor, and my ears are deaf to it! Now speak! Hast thou a message? Who is it sends a rat to bring me news?"

"Ali Partab."

"So-ho! And who is Ali Partab? He needs to learn manners. He has come to a stern school for them!"

"Sahib! Great one! Prince of Swordsmen! Ali Partab is Mohammed Gunga sahib's man. He bid me say that he is held a prisoner, in a bear cage, in Jaimihr's palace and needs aid."

Alwa's black beard dropped on to his chest, as he frowned in thought. He had nine men with him. Jaimibr had by this time perhaps as many as nine thousand, for no one knew but Jaimihr and the priests how many in the district waited to espouse his cause. The odds seemed about as stupendous as any that a man of his word had ever been called upon to take.

A moment more, and without consulting any one, he bade one of his men dismount.

"Put that hag on thy horse!" he commanded. "Mount thou behind another!"

The order was obeyed. Another Rangar took the led horse, and Joanna found herself perched like a monkey, on a horse that objected to the change of riders, between two troopers whose iron-thewed legs squeezed hers into the saddle.

"To Howrah City!" ordered Alwa, starting off at an easy, desert-eating amble; and without a word of comment, but with downward glances at their swords and a little back-stiffening which was all of excitement that they deigned to show, his men wheeled three and three behind him.



IT WAS no affair of Alwa's that a full moon shone that night; none of his arranging that on that one night of the month Jaimihr and his most trusted bodyguard should go with the priests and the Maharaja to inspect the treasure. Alwa was a soldier, born to take instant advantage of chance-sent opportunity; Jaimihr was a schemer, born to indecision and the cunning that seeks underhanded means, but overlooks the obvious. Because the streets were full of men whose allegiance was doubtful yet; because he himself would be too much occupied to sit like a spider in a web and watch the intentions of the crowd unfold, Jaimihr had turned out every retainer to his name, and had scattered them about the city, with orders if they were needed to rally on a certain point.

Alwa, as a soldier, knew exactly where fresh horses could be borrowed while his tired ones rested. A little way beyond the outskirts of the city lived a man who was neither Mohammedan nor Hindu; a fearful man, who took no sides, but paid his taxes, carried on his business, and behaved; a Jew who dealt in horses and in any other animal or thing that could be brought to show a profit.

Alwa had an utterly complete contempt for Jews, as he thought was right and proper in a Rangar of the blood. He had not met many of them, and those he had, had borne away the memory of most outrageous insult, gratuitously offered and rubbed home. But this particular Jew was a money lender on occasion; and his rates had proved as reasonable as his acceptance of Alwa's unwritten promise had been prompt. A man who holds his given word as sacred as did Alwa respects, in the teeth of custom or religion, the man who accepts that word; so, when the chance had offered, Alwa had done the Jew occasional favors and had won his gratitude. He now counted on the Jew for fresh horses.

To reach him, he had to wade the Howrah River, less than a mile from where the burning-ghats glowed dull crimson against the sky. The crowd around the ghats was the first intimation he received that the streets might prove less densely thronged than usual. It was the Jew, beard-scrabbling and fidgeting among his horses, who reminded him that when the full moon shone most of the populace and most of Jaimihr's and Howrah's guards would be occupied near Siva's temple and the palace.

He left his own horses groomed again, and gorging their fill of good clean gram in the Jew's ramshackle stable place. Joanna he turned loose, to sneak into any rathole that she chose. Then, with their swords drawn—for if trouble came, it would be certain to come suddenly—he and his nine made a wide-ringed circuit of the city, to a point where the main street passing Jaimihr's palace ended in a dune of wind-piled desert sand. From the moment when they reached that point they did not waste a second; action trod on the level of thought, and thought flashed fast as Summer lightning.

They lit through the deserted street, troubling for speed, not silence; the few whom they passed had no time to determine who they were, and no one followed them. A few frightened night wanderers ran at sight of them, hiding down side streets, but when they brought up at last outside Jaimihr's palace gate they had so far escaped recognition. And that meant that no one would carry word to Jaimihr or his men.

It was death-dark outside the bronze-hinged double gate; only a dim lamp hung

above from chains, to show how dark it was, and the moon—cut off by trees and houses on a bluff of rising ground—lent nothing to the gloom.



"OPEN! Open! The Jaimihr sahib comes!" shouted Alwa, and one of his horsemen legged up close beside the gate. Some one moved inside, for his footsteps could be heard. Whoever he was appeared to listen cautiously.

"Open, for the Jaimihr sahib!" repeated Alwa.

Evidently that was not the usual command, or otherwise the gates would have swung open on the instant. Instead, one gate moved inward by a fraction of a foot, and a pugreed head peered cautiously between the gap. That, though, was sufficient. With a laugh, the man up closest drove his sword hilt straight between the Hindu's eyes, driving his horse's shoulder up against the gate; three others spurred and shoved beside him. Not thirty seconds later, Alwa and his nine were striking hoof sparks on the stone of Jaimihr's courtyard, and the gates—that could have easily withstood a hundred-man assault with battering-rams—had clanged behind them, bolted tight against their owner.

"Where is the bear cage?" demanded Alwa. "It is a bear I need, not blood!"

The dozen left inside to guard the palace had recovered with amazing quickness from the panic. They were lining up in the middle of the courtyard, ready to defend their honor, even if the palace should be lost. It was barely probable that Jaimihr's temper would permit them the privilege of dying quickly, should he come and find his palace looted; a Rangar's sword seemed better, and they made ready to die hard.

"Where is Ali Partab?"

There was no answer. The little crowd drew in, and one took up the fighting attitude that each man liked the best.

"I say I did not come for blood! I came for Ali Partab! If I get him, unharmed, I ride away again; but otherwise——"

"What, otherwise?" asked the leader of the guards.

"This palace burns!"

There was a momentary consultation—no argument, but a quickly reached agreement.

"He is here, unharmed," declared the leader gruffly.

"Bring him out!"

"What proof have we that he is all you came for?"

"My given word."

"But the Jaimihr sahib——"

"You also have my given word that unless I get Ali Partab this palace burns, with all that there is in it!"

Distrustful still, the leader of the guard called out to a sweeper, skulking in the shadow by the stables, to go and loose Ali Partab.

"Send no sweepers to him!" ordered Alwa. "He has suffered indignity enough. Go thou!"

The leader of the guard obeyed. Two minutes later Ali Partab stood before Alwa and saluted.

"Sahib, my master's thanks!"

"They are accepted," answered Alwa, with almost regal dignity. "Bring a lamp!" he ordered.

One of the guard brought a hand lantern, and by its light Alwa examined Ali Partab closely. He was filthy, and his clothing reeked of the disgusting confinement he had endured.

"Give this man clothing fit for a man of mine!" commanded Alwa.

"Sahib, there is none; perhaps the Jaimihr sahib——"

"I have ordered!"

There was a movement among Alwa's men—a concerted horse-length forward movement, made terrifying by the darkness. Each man knew well enough that the men they were bullying could fight. Success, should success have to be forced at the point of the sword, would depend in large measure on which side took the opponents by surprise.

"It is done, sahib," said the leader of the guard, and one man hurried off to execute the order. Ten minutes later—they were ten impatient minutes, during which the horses sensed the fever of anxiety and could hardly be made to stand—Ali Partab stood arrayed in clean, new khaki that fitted him reasonably well.

"A sword, now!" demanded Alwa. "Thy sword! This man had a sword when he was taken! Give him thine, unless there is a better to be had."

There was nothing for it but obedience, for few things were more certain than that Alwa was not there to waste time asking for anything he would not fight for if refused. The guard held out his long sword, hilt first, and Ali Partab strapped it on.

"I had three horses when they took me," he asserted; "three good ones, sound and swift, belonging to my master."

"Then take three of Jaimihr's!"

It took ten minutes more for Ali Partab and two of Alwa's men to search the stables and bring out the best three chargers of the twenty and more reserved for Jaimihr's private use. They were wonders of horses, half Arab and half native-bred, clean-limbed and firm—worth more, each one of them, than all three of Mohammed Gunga's put together.

"Are they good enough?" demanded Alwa.

"My master will be satisfied," grinned Ali Partab.

"Open the gate, then!"

Alwa was peering through the blackness for a sight of firearms, but could see none. He guessed—and he was right—that the guard had taken full advantage of their master's absence, and had been gambling in a corner while their rifles rested under cover somewhere else. For a second he hesitated, dallying with the notion of disarming the guard before he left; then he decided that a fight was scarcely worth the risking now, and with ten good men behind him he wheeled and scooted through the wide-flung gates into outer gloom.

 HE GALLOPED none too fast, for his party was barely out of range before a ragged volley ripped from the palace wall; one of his men, hampered and delayed by a led horse that was trying to break away from him, was actually hit, and begged Alwa to ride back and burn the palace after all. He was grumbling still about the honor of a Rangar, when Alwa called a halt in the shelter of a deserted side street in order to question Ali Partab further.

Ali Partab protested that he did not know what to say or think about the missionaries. He explained his orders, and vowed that his honor held him there in Howrah until Miss McClean should consent to come away. He did not mention the father; he was a mere side issue. It was Alwa who asked after him.

"A tick on the belly of an ox rides with the ox," said Ali Partab.

"Lead on, then, to the mission house," commanded Alwa, and the ten-man troop proceeded to obey. They had reached the main street again, and were wheeling into

it, when Joanna sprang from gutter darkness and intercepted them. She was all but ridden down before Ali Partab recognized her.

"The mohurs, sahib!" she demanded. "Three golden mohurs!"

"Aye, three!" said Ali Partab, giving her a hand and yanking her off the ground. She leaped across his horse's rump behind him; he seemed to have less compunction about personal defilement than the others had.

"Is she thy wife, or thy mother-in-law?" laughed Alwa.

"Nay, sahib, but my creditor! The mother of confusion tells me that the Miss sahib and her father are in Howrah's palace!"

They halted, all together in a cluster in the middle of the street, shut in by darkness, watched, for all they knew, by a hundred enemies.

"Of their own will, or as prisoners?"

"As prisoners, sahib."

"Back to the side street! Quickly! Jaimihr's rat's nest is one affair," he muttered. "Howrah's beehive is another!"

CHAPTER XIX

Now, secrets and things of the councils of Kings

Are deuced expensive to buy,

For it wouldn't look nice if a Councilor's price

Were anything other than high.

Be advised, though, and note that the price they will quote

Is less with each grade you go deeper,

And (up on its toes, it's the Underworld knows!)

The cheapest of all is the sweeper.

T. M.

JOANNA, when Alwa forgot about her, and loosed her to run just where she chose, had streaked, down alleys and over roof tops, straight for the mission house. She found there nothing but a desultory guard, and an impression, rather than the traces, of an empty cage. About two minutes of cautious questioning of neighbors satisfied her where the missionaries were. Nothing short of death seemed able to deprive her of ability to flit like a black bat through the shadows, and the distance to Howrah's palace was accomplished, by her usual bat's-entry route, in less time than a pony would have taken by the devious street. Before Alwa had thundered on Jaimihr's gate, Joanna had mingled in the crowd outside the palace, and was shrewdly questioning again.

She arrived too late to see McClean and his daughter seized. What she did hear was

that they were prisoners, and that the Maharaja, Jaimihr, and the priests were all of them engaged in the secret ceremony, whose beginning was a monthly spectacle, but whose subsequent developments—supposed to be somewhere in the bowels of the earth—were known only to the men who held the key.

Like a rat running in the wainscot holes, she tried to follow the procession. Like everybody else, she knew the way it took from the palace gate, and—as few others were—she was aware of a scaling-place on the outer wall, where a huge baobab drooped century-scarred branches nearly to the ground on each side. The sacred monkeys used that route, and where they went Joanna could contrive to follow.

It was another member of the sweeper caste, lurking in the darkness of an inner courtyard, who pointed out to her the bronze-barred door through which the treasure guardians had chanted on their way. It was he, too, who told her that Rosemary McClean and her father had been rushed into the palace through the main entrance. Also, he informed her that there was no way, positively no way practicable even for a monkey or a bird, of following farther. He was a sweeper, intimate acquaintance of creeper ladders, trap doors, gutters, drains, and byways. She realized at once that there would be no wisdom in attempting to find within an hour what he had not discovered in a lifetime.

So Joanna, her beady eyes glittering between the wrinkled folds of skin, slunk deeper in a shadow and began to think. She, the looker-on, had seen the whole play from its first beginning, and could judge at least that part of it which had its bearing on her missionary masters. First, she knew what Jaimihr's ambition was; every man in Howrah knew how he planned to seize Miss McClean when the moment should be propitious, and her Eastern wisdom warned her that Jaimihr foiled would stop at nothing to contrive vengeance. If he could not seize Miss McClean, he would be likely to use every means within his power to bring about her death and prevent another from making off with his prize. Jaimihr, then, was the most pressing danger.

Second, as a Hindu she knew well how fiendishly the priests loathed the Christian missionaries; and it was common knowledge that the Maharaja was cross-hobbled

by the priests. The Maharaja was a fearful man, and unless the priests and Jaimihr threatened him with a show of combination, there was a slight chance that he might dread British vengeance too much to dare permit violence to the McCleans. Possibly he might hold out against the priests alone; but before an open alliance between Jaimihr and the priests he would surrender for his own throne's sake.

So far, Joanna could reason readily enough, for there was a vast fund of wisdom stored beneath her wrinkled ugliness. But her Eastern limitation stopped her there. She could not hold loyalty to more than one cause, nor to more than one offshoot of that cause, in the same shrewd head at once. She decided that at all costs Jaimihr must be got out of the way, so that the Maharaja might be left to argue with the priests alone. For the moment, no other thought occurred to her.



THE means seemed ready to her hand. A peculiarity of the East, which is democratic in some ways under the veneer of swaggering autocracy, is that servants of the very lowest caste may speak, and argue on occasion, with men who would shudder at the prospect of defilement from their touch. There was nothing in the least outrageous in the proposition that the sweeper, waiting in a corner for the procession to emerge again so that he might curl on his mat and sleep undisturbed when it had gone, should dare to approach Jaimihr and address him. He would run no small risk of being beaten by the guards, but, on the other hand, should he catch Jaimihr's ear and interest the Prince, he would be safe.

"Wouldst thou win Jaimihr's favor?" asked Joanna, creeping up beside him, and whispering with all the suggestiveness she could assume.

"Who would not? Who knows but that within a week he will not be ruler?"

"True. I have a message for him. I must hurry back. Deliver it for me."

"What would be the nature of the message?"

"This. His prisoner is gone. A raid has taken place. In his absence, while his men patrolled the city, certain others—Rangars—came into his palace, looted, and prepared to burn. Bid him hurry back, with all the men he can collect."

"From whom is this message?" asked he.

"From the captain of the guard."

"And I am to deliver it? Thou dodderest! Mother of a murrain, have I not trouble sufficient for one man? Who bears bad news to a Prince, or to any but his enemy? I—with these two eyes—I saw what happened to the men who bore bad news to Howrah once. I—with this broom of mine—I helped clean up the mess. Deliver thine own message!"

"Nay. Afterward, I will say this—to the Jaimihr sahib in person. There is one, I will tell him; a sweeper in the palace, who refused to bear tidings when the need was great."

"If his palace is burnt and his wealth all ashes, who cares what Jaimihr hears?"

"There is no glow yet in the sky," said Joanna, looking up. "The palace is not yet in flames; they loot still."

"What if it be not true?"

"Will Jaimihr not be glad?"

"Glad to see me, the bearer of false news, impaled, or crushed beneath an elephant, ay! Glad indeed."

"The reward, were the Jaimihr sahib warned in time, would be a great one."

"Then, why waitest thou not to have word with him? Art thou above rewards?"

"Have no fear! He will know in good time who it was brought *thee* the news."

They argued for ten minutes, Joanna threatening and coaxing and promising rewards until at last the man consented. It was the thought, thoroughly encouraged by Joanna, that the penalty for not speaking would be greater than the beating he might get for bearing evil news, that at last convinced him; and it was not until she had won him over, and assured herself that he would not fail, that it dawned on Joanna just what an edged tool she was playing with. While getting rid of Jaimihr, she was endangering the liberty and life of Alwa—the one man able to do anything for the McCleans!

That thought sent her scooting over house tops, diving down dark alleyways, racing, dodging, hiding, dashing on again, and brought her in the nick of time to a ditch, from whose shelter she sprang and seized the hand of Ali Partab. That incident, again, and her intimation that the missionaries were in Howrah's palace, took Alwa back up the black-blind side street; and before he emerged from it again he saw

Jaimihr and his ten go thundering past, their eyes on the skyline for a hint of conflagration, and their horses, belly to the earth, racing as only fear, or enthusiasm, or grim desperation in their riders' minds can make them race.

A little later, in groups and scattered fours, and one by one, his heavy-breathing troopers followed, cursing the order that had sent them abroad without their horses, damning, as none but a dismounted cavalryman can damn, the earth's unevenness, their swords, their luck, their priests, the night, their boots, and Jaimihr. Forewarned, Alwa held on down the pitch-dark side street, into whose steep-sided chasm the moon's rays would not reach for an hour or two to come, and once again he led his party in a sweeping, wide-swung circle, loose-reined and swifter than the silent night wind—this time for Howrah's palace. There was his given word, plighted to Mohammed Gunga, to redeem.

CHAPTER XX

Now, his purse may be lean, if his 'scutcheon is clean
And he's backed by a dozen true men;
With a sword to his name and a wrist for the same
He may go beard the King in his den! T. M.

IT IS the privilege of Emperors and Kings and Maharajas that, however little real authority they have, or however much their power is undermined by men behind the throne, dignity must be accorded them. They must be, on the face of things, obeyed.

Inspection of the treasure finished, and an hour-long mummary of rites performed, the thirty wound their way, chanting in single file, back again. The bronze-enforced door, that was only first of half a hundred barriers between approach and the semi-sacred hoard, at last clanged shut and was locked with three locks, each of whose individual keys was in the keeping of a separate member of the Three—Maharaja, Prince, and Priest. The same keys fitted every door of the maze-made passages, but no one door would open without all three.

Speaking like an omen from the deepest shadow, the sweeper called to Jaimihr.

"Sahib, thy palace burns! Sahib, thy prisoner runs! Haste, sahib! Call thy men and hasten back! Thy palace is in flames! The Rangars come to——"

As a raven, disturbed into night omen-

croaking, he sent forth his news from utter blackness into nerve-strung tension. No one member of the thirty but was on the alert for friction or sudden treachery; they were all eyes for each other, and the croaking fell on ears strained to the aching-point. He had time to repeat his warning before one of Jaimihr's men stepped into the darkness where he hid, and dragged him out.

"Sahib, a woman came but now and brought the news. It was from the captain of the guard. The Rangars came to take their man away. They broke in. They burn. They loot. They——"

But Jaimihr did not wait another instant to hear the rest. To him, this seemed like the action of his brother. Now, he imagined, he could read between the lines! That letter sent to Alwa had been misreported to him, and had been really a call to come and free the prisoner and wreak Rangar vengeance! He understood!

But first he must save his palace, if it could be saved. The priests must have deceived him, so he wasted no time in arguing with them. He ran, with his guards behind him, to the outer wall of Siva's temple where the horses waited, each with a *sais* squatting at his head.

The *saises* were sent scattering among the crowd to give the alarm and send the rest of his contingent hurrying back. Jaimihr and his ten drove home their spurs, and streaked as the frightened jackals run when a tiger interrupts them at their worry, bent-for-leather up the unlit street.

Then Maharaja Howrah's custom-accorded dignity stood him in good stead. It flashed across his worried brain that space had been given him by the gods in which to think. Jaimihr—one facet of the problem, and perhaps the sharpest—would have his hands full for a while, and the priests, wish how they would, would never dare omit the after ritual in Siva's temple. He, untrammelled for an hour to come, might study out a course to take, and hold, with those embarrassing prisoners of his.

He turned, updrawn in regal stateliness, and intimated to the High Priest that the ceremony might proceed without him. When the priests demurred and murmured, he informed them that he would be pleased to give them audience when the ritual was over, and without deigning another argument he turned through a side door into the palace.



WITHIN ten minutes he was seated in his throne room. One minute later his prisoners stood in front of him, still holding each other's hands, and the guard withdrew. The great doors opening on the marble outer hall clanged tight, and in this room there were no carved screens through which a hidden, rustling world might listen. There was gold-encrusted splendor; there were glittering, hanging ornaments that far outdid the peacock's feathers of the canopy above the throne. But the walls were solid, and the marble floor rang hard and true. There was no nook or corner anywhere that could conceal a man.

For a minute, still bejeweled in his robes of state and glittering as the diamonds in his head dress caught the light from half a dozen hanging lamps, the Maharaja sat and gazed at them, his chin resting on one hand and his silk-clad elbow laid on the carved gold arm of his throne.

"Why am I troubled?" he demanded suddenly.

"You know!" said the missionary.

His daughter clutched his hand tightly, partly to reassure him, partly because she knew that a despot would be bearded now in his gold-bespattered den, and fear gripped her.

"Maharaja sahib, when I came here, with letters from the Government of India, and asked you for a mission house in which to live and work, I told you that I came as a friend; as a respectful sympathizer. I told you I would not incite rebellion against you, and that I would not interfere with native custom or your authority so long as acquiescence and obedience by me did not run counter to the overriding law of the British Government."

Howrah did not even move his head in token that he listened, but his tired eyes answered.

"To that extent, I promised not to interfere with your religion."

The Maharaja nodded.

"Once, twice—in all, nine times—I came, and warned you that the practise of suttee was and is illegal. My knowledge of Sanskrit is only slight, but there are others of my race who have had opportunity to translate the Sanskrit Vedaś, and I have in writing what they found in them. I warned you, when that information reached me, that your priests have been deliberately

lying to you; that the Vedas say 'thrice blessed is she who dies of a broken heart because her lord and master leaves her.' They say nothing, absolutely nothing, about suttee or its practise, which from the beginning has been a damnable invention the priests.

"But the practise of suttee has continued. I have warned the Government frequently, in writing, but for reasons which I do not profess to understand they have made no move as yet. For that reason, and for no other, I have tried to be a thorn in your side, and will continue to try to be until this suttee ceases!"

"Why," demanded Howrah, "since you are a foreigner with neither influence nor right, do you stay here and behold what you can not change? Does a snake lie sleeping on an ant hill? Does a woman watch the butchering of lambs? Yet, do ant hills cease to be, and are lambs not butchered? Look the other way! Sleep softer in another place!"

"I am a prisoner. For months past my daughter and I have been prisoners to all intents and purposes, and you, Maharaja sahib, have known it well. Now, the one man who was left to be our escort to another place is a prisoner too. You know that too. And you ask me why I stay! Suppose you answer?"

Rosemary squeezed his hand again, this time less to restrain him than herself. She was torn between an inclination to laugh at the daring, and shiver at the indiscretion of taking to task a man whose one word could place them at the mercy of the priests of Siva or of the mob. But Duncan McClean, a little bowed about the shoulders, peered through his spectacles and waited, quite unawed by all the splendor, for the Maharaja's answer.

"Of what man do you speak?" the Maharaja asked, still undecided what to do with them, and anxious above all things to disguise his thoughts. "What man is a prisoner, and how do you know it?"

Before McClean had time to answer him, a spear haft rang on the great teak double door. There was a pause, and the clang repeated; another pause, a third reverberating, humming metal notice of an interruption, and the doors swung wide. A Hindu, salaaming low so that the expression of his face could not be seen, called out down the long length of the hall—

"The Alwa sahib waits, demanding audience!"



THERE was no change apparent on the Maharaja's face. His fingers tightened on the jeweled simitar that protruded, silk-sashed, from his middle, but neither voice, nor eyes, nor lips betrayed the least emotion. It was the McCleans whose eyes blazed with a new-born hope, that was destined to be dashed a second later.

"Has he guards with him?"

"But ten, Maharaja sahib."

"Then remove these people to the place where they were, and then admit him—without his guards!"

"I demand permission to speak with this Alwa sahib!" said McClean.

"Remove them!"

Two spear-armed custodians of the door advanced. Resistance was obviously futile. Still holding his daughter's hand, the missionary let himself be led to the outer hall and down a corridor, where presently a six-inch door shut prisoners and guards from even sound of what transpired beyond.

Alwa, swaggering until his long spurs jingled like a bunch of keys each time his boot heels struck the marble floor, strode straight as a soldier up to the raised throne-dais, took no notice whatever of the sudden slamming of the door behind him, looked knife-keenly into the Maharaja's eyes, and saluted, with a flourish.

"I come from bursting open Jaimihr's buzzard roost!" he intimated mildly. "He held a man of mine. I have the man."

Merely to speak first was insolence; but that breach of etiquette was nothing to his manner and his voice. It appeared that he was so utterly confident of his own prowess that he could afford to speak casually; he did not raise his voice or emphasize a word. He was a man of his word, relating facts, and every line of his steel-thewed anatomy showed it.

"I sent a letter to you, by horseman, with a present," said Howrah. "I await the answer."

Alwa's eyes changed, and his attention stiffened. Not having been at home, he knew nothing of the letter, but he did not choose to acknowledge the fact. The principle that one shares the truth with only friends, is good, when taken by surprise.

"I preferred to have confirmation of the

matter from the Maharaja's lips in person, so, since I had this other matter to attend to, I combined two visits in one trip."

He lied, as he walked and fought, like a soldier, and the weary man who watched him from the throne detected no false ring.

"I informed you that I had extended my protection to the two missionaries, man and daughter."

"You did. Also you did well."

He tossed that piece of comfort to the despot, as a man might throw table scraps to a starveling dog!

"I have come to take away the missionaries," he added.

"With a guard of ten!" exclaimed the Maharaja.

It was the first admission of astonishment that either man had made.

"Are you not aware that Jaimihr, too, has eyes on the woman?" asked Howrah.

"I am aware of it. I have shown Jaimihr how deep my fear of him lies! I know too how deep the love lies between thee and thy brother, King of Howrah! I am here to remind thee that many more than ten men would race their horses to a standstill to answer my summons—brave men, Maharaja sahib; men whose blades are keen, and straightly held, and true. They who would rally round me against Jaimihr would——"

"Would fight for me?"

"I have not yet said so."

There was a little, barely accentuated emphasis on the one word "yet." The Maharaja thought a minute before he answered.

"How many mounted troopers could you raise?"

"Who knows? A thousand—three thousand—according to the soreness of the need."

"You have heard—I know that you have heard—what, even at this minute, awaits the British? I know, for I have taken care to know, that a cousin of yours, Mohammed Gunga, is interested for the British. So—so, I am interested to have word with you."



ALWA laughed ironically.

"And the tiger asked the wolf pack where good hunting was!" he mocked. "I and my men strike which way suits us when the hour comes."

"My palace has many chambers in it!" hinted Howrah. "There have been men who wondered what the light of day was like, having long ago forgotten!"

13

"Make me prisoner!" laughed Alwa. "Count then the hours until three thousand blades join Jaimihr, and help him grease the dungeon hinges with thy fat!"

"Having looted Jaimihr's palace, you speak thus?"

"Having whipped a dog, I wait for the dog to lick my hand!"

"What is your purpose with these missionaries?"

"To redeem my given word."

"And then?"

"I would be free to pledge it again."

"To me?"

"To whom I choose."

"I will give thee the missionaries, against thy word to fight on my side when the hour comes."

"Against whom?"

"The British."

"I have no quarrel with the British, yet."

"I will give thee the missionaries, against thy word to support me on this throne."

"Against whom?"

"Against all comers."

"If I refuse, what then?"

"Jaimihr—who by this time must surely be thy very warmest friend!—shall attack thee unmolested. Pledge thy word—take thy missionary people—and Jaimihr must oppose thee and me combined."

"Should Jaimihr ride after me, what then?"

"If he takes many with him, he must leave his camp unguarded, or only weakly guarded. Then I would act. If he goes with few, how can he take thy castle?"

"Then I have the missionaries and thy protection against Jaimihr, against my promise to support thee on the throne?"

"My word on it."

"And mine."

Howrah rose, stepped forward to the dais-edge, and held out his hand.

"Nay!" swore Alwa, recoiling. "My word is given. I take no Hindu's hand!"

Howrah glared for a moment, but thought better of the hot retort that rose to his lips. Instead, he struck a silver gong, and, when the doors swung open, ordered the prisoners to be produced.

"Escape through the palace grounds," he advised Alwa. "A man of mine will show the way."

"Remember!" growled Alwa, emphasizing the wording of his promise, "I stand pledged to support thee on that throne of thine. There was naught said about my method!"

CHAPTER XXI

Howrah City bows the knee
 (More or less) to masters three,
 King, and Prince, and Siva.
 Howrah City comes and goes —
 Buys and sells—but never knows
 Which are friends and which are foes—
 King, or Prince, or Siva.

T. M.

THAT which followed Alwa's break-away was all but the tensest hour in Howrah City's history. The inevitable—the foiled rage of the priests, and Jaimihr's impudent insistence that the missionaries should be handed over to him, with the Maharaja's answer—all combined to set the murmurings afoot. Men said that the threatened rebellion against the rule of Britain had broken loose at last, and a dozen other quite as false and equally probable things.

Jaimihr, finding that his palace was intact, and that only the prisoner and three horses from his stable were missing, placed the whole guard under arrest, stormed futilely, while his hurrying swarm flocked to him through the dinning streets, and then, mad-angry and made reckless by his rage, rode with a hundred at his back to Howrah's palace, scattering the bee swarm of inquisitive but so far peaceful citizens right and left.

With little ceremony, he sent in word to the Maharaja saying that his private honor was at stake, and that he would stop at nothing to wreak vengeance. He wanted the man who had dared invade his palace, the man who had been released, and the two who were the prime cause of the outrage. And with just as little ceremony, word came out that the Maharaja would please himself as to what he did with prisoners. That mesage was followed almost instantly by the high priest of Siva in person, awfully disgruntled, and blasphemously vindictive. He it was who told Jaimihr of the unexpected departure through the palace grounds.

"Ride, Jaimihr sahib! Ride!" he advised. "How many have you? A hundred? Plenty! Ride and cut him off! There is but one road to Alwa's place; he must pass by the northern ford through Howrah River. Ride, and cut him off!"

So, loose-reined, foam-flecked, breathing vengeance, Jaimihr and his hundred thundered through the dark, hot night, making a beeline for the point where Alwa's band

must pass, in order to take the shortest route to safety.

It was his kept word to the Jew that saved Alwa's neck. He and his men were riding borrowed horses, and he had promised to return them and reclaim his own. They had moved at a walk through winding, dark palace alleys, led by a palace attendant, and debouched through a narrow door that gave barely horse room into the road where Jaimihr had once killed the Mahratta trader who molested Rosemary McClean. The missionary and his daughter were mounted on the horses seized in Jaimihr's stable. Joanna, moaning about "three gold mohurs, sahib—three, where are they?" was up behind Ali Partab, tossed like a pea on a drumskin by the lunging movements of the wonder of a horse.

Instead of heading straight for home, in which case—although he did not know it—he would have been surely overhauled and brought to bay, he led at a stiff hand gallop to the Jew's, changed horses, crossed the ford by the burning-ghats, and swooped in a wide half circle for the sandy trail that would take him homeward. He made the home road miles beyond the point where Jaimihr waited for him, drew rein into the long-striding amble that desert-taught horses love, and led on, laughing.

"Ho!" he laughed. "Ho-ho! Here, then, is the end of Mohammed Gunga's scheming! Now, when he comes with arguments to make me fight on the British side, what a tale I have for him! Ho! What a swearing there will be! I will give him his missionary people, and say:

"There, Mohammed Gunga, cousin mine, there is my word redeemed. There is thy man into the bargain. There are three horses for thee. And I—I am at Howrah's beck and call!"

"Allah! What a swearing there will be!"



THERE was swearing, viler and more blasphemous than any of which Mohammed Gunga might be capable, where Jaimihr waited in the dark. He waited until the yellow dawn broke up the first dim streaks of violet before he realized that Alwa had given him the slip; and he cursed even the High Priest of Siva, when that worthy accosted him and asked what tidings.

"Another trick!" swore Jaimihr. "So thou and thy temple rats saw fit to send me

packing for the night! What devils' tricks have been hatched out in my absence?"

The High Priest started to protest, but Jaimihr silenced him with coarse-mouthed threats.

"I, too, can play double when occasion calls for it!" he swore.

And with that hint at coming trouble he clattered on home to his palace.

To begin with, when he reached home, he had the guard beaten all but unconscious for having dared let raiders in during the night before. Then he sent them, waterless and thirsty, back to the dungeon. He felt better then, and called for ink and paper.

For hours he thought and wrote alternately, tearing up letter after letter. Then, at last, he read over a composition that satisfied him, and set his seal at the foot. He placed the whole in a silver tube, poured wax into the joint, and called for the fat man who had been responsible for Ali Partab's capture.

"Dog!" he snarled. "Interfering fool! All this was thy doing! Didst thou see the guard beaten a while ago?"

"I did. It was a lordly beating. The men are all but dead, but will live for such another one."

"Wouldst thou be so beaten?"

"How can I prevent, if your Highness wishes?"

"Take this. It is intended for Peshawur, but may be given to any British officer above the rank of Major. It calls for a receipt. Do not dare come back, or be caught in Howrah City, without a receipt for that tube and its contents intact!"

"If Alwa and Mohammed Gunga are in league with my brother," muttered Jaimihr to himself when the fat Hindu had gone, "then the sooner the British quarrel with both of them the better. Howrah alone I can dispose of easily enough, and there is yet time before rebellion starts for the British to spike the guns of Alwa and Mohammed Gunga. By the time that is done, I will be Maharaja!"

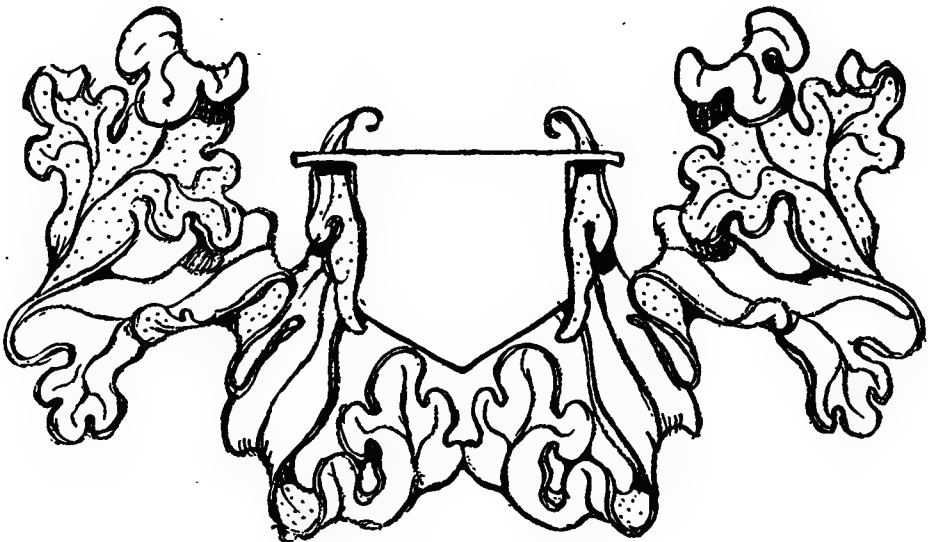
It was less than three days later when the word came mysteriously through the undiscoverable "underground" route of India for all men to be ready.

"By the next full moon," went the message, from the priests alone knew where, "all India will be waiting. When the full moon rises, then the hour is come!"

"And when that full moon rises," thought Jaimihr to himself, "my brother's funeral rites will be past history!"

For the present, though, he made believe to regret his recent rage, and was courteous to priest and Maharaja alike; even sending to his brother to apologize.

TO BE CONCLUDED



THAT NIGHT AT ELISA'S



by W. Townsend

Q N A SATURDAY afternoon (in October, when the *Umballa* was discharging coal at Genoa, Mr. Harrington came up out of the engine room and found me on the well-deck reading a newspaper.

He nodded, somewhat gloomily I thought, and wiped his greasy hands on a piece of cotton waste without speaking.

Said I after a time:

"Here's a London paper, if you'd like it, Mr. Harrington. The butcher brought it on board this morning with the letters."

Mr. Harrington smiled in an absent-minded way and thrust the waste into the pocket of his old boiler suit.

"Never interfere in what don't concern you," he said. "Especially not in other people's quarrels. It leads to unpleasantness."

From this I gathered that there had been trouble that day in the engine room.

"Never interfere!" said I. "Right! I didn't want to. Take the paper; I'm going below to change."

This was before tea. Later on we stood once more on the well-deck in the midst of a litter of ropes and hatch covers and big baskets deep in coal dust.

"Goin' on shore?" asked the second mate.

"Yes," said Mr. Harrington. "To see

the sights an' admire the way the police handle the traffic."

"May meet you there," said the second mate. "Whereabouts 'ull you be?"

Mr. Harrington eyed him sadly.

"Mr. Watson, we're out for a quiet, respectable evenin'. If I had any wish to study the methods of the police in quellin' a riot, I'd like nothin' better than to run across you. As it is, I'll do my best not to. But we'll be round in the morning with the British Consul to bail you out, same as usual."

So saying, he hailed a passing boatman and hired him at a price to row us across the harbor.

Now the city of Genoa claims with justice to be one of the finest in the world. I gathered that much after I returned home. Mr. Harrington and I wandered soberly and sedately past beautiful palaces and churches dating back to the days of Columbus and perhaps the Crusades; we halted to inspect office buildings and hotels of the most modern type, comparing them unfavorably with those in London; and as we watched the people sauntering through the streets or sitting at the little round tables in the cafés, we felt a certain lofty contempt, for to us they were foreigners, though in their own country. In short, barring the fact that we

had no guide book to refer to, we behaved precisely like a couple of Cook's tourists seeing Italy and spent one of the dreariest evenings imaginable. Not even a glass or two of white wine from small wicker-covered bottles brought us any comfort.

"Let's be movin'," said Mr. Harrington suddenly. "We'll walk back to the ship, 'round by the quayside an' drop into Elisa's. I've not seen her for about three years an' maybe she's forgotten me. I hope so."

"Why?" I asked. "What happened?"

"Nothin' much. It wasn't my fault anyhow. Elisa's all right in her way. It's a funny way, of course."

This explains how it was that we did meet the second mate of the *Umballa* after all; also the chief engineer and the third.

The back room at Elisa's was crowded to suffocation, the port being full of British ships, but as we searched for a vacant table there arose a wild and joyous yell.

"*Umballa* ahoy! We've been keepin' your seats."

And we saw through the smoke the second mate beckoning.

"Pleased to meet you," said he, as we sat down. "How you've grown! Been expectin' you two quite a while."

"We weren't comin' here at all," explained Mr. Harrington. "But as we were passing by, we——"

"That's what they all say," said the second mate.

The chief engineer chuckled.

"What 'u'l ye have? The whuskey's poison un' tha beer isn't fit ta drink. Either wa' ye'll be sorry."

"It's my shout!" said the second mate. "Anything in Elisa's is better than nothin' nowhere else."

"Is that so?" said Mr. Harrington. "I don't understand a word of what you're sayin', but I've no doubt it's very clever. Mine's a lager beer, please miss, an' not quite so much kerosene in it this time as there was last."

He spoke to a girl who took our orders and smiled on us after the custom of Elisa's.



WHY any one in his senses should ever have gone to Elisa's is a mystery. The room at the back was always dirty and overheated. The decorations were old and tarnished; even when new they could only have been vulgar and

tawdry. And the chief no more than told the truth when he described the liquor sold as poisonous. And yet at every table sat men from off the ships, drinking and smoking and quarreling and bawling songs at the tops of their voices. And if noise and tobacco smoke were the hallmarks of success, then Elisa's bar had no rivals on the waterfront at Genoa.

On a platform at the end of the room under flaring gas jets was a piano, on which one of the girls played a halting accompaniment for any who cared to sing. Indeed Elisa issued cards, printed in English, stating that a concert was held in her bar every evening. The concert—save the mark!—was in full swing when we arrived, and the singer, a thin and melancholy Tynesider with a squeaky voice, was being pelted with match boxes and told flatly to dry up an' not make a bloomin' fool of himself. Which was the usual method of signifying disapproval at Elisa's.

Elisa herself, fat and unspeakably dignified, dressed in black silk, with her cheeks covered with rice powder and her lips carmine, paraded to and fro, smiling graciously at her customers' weaknesses and keeping a cold and watchful eye on the drinks.

Quarrels were frequent, of course, but to these no one paid the slightest attention, save when words seemed likely to give place to blows. Then, while the crowd bellowed advice to the rival parties, egging them on to fight, Elisa would rage and storm furiously, the while uttering shrill threats about the police and the law. Which threats were invariably treated with derision.

For as our second mate said:

"Because I choose to drink this swill it don't mean I'm goin' to let Elisa tell me how to behave. Not a bit of it. 'Sides, she wouldn't dare to send for the police; we'd wreck her bar if she did."

One young gentleman, he being the third mate of a big Newcastle boat, so I was informed, fell fast asleep with his head pillowed on the table, and friends carefully anointed him with beer. And near us a man from Cardiff and a West countryman from Bristol, engineers both, disputed wrathfully on a point beyond the wit of man to decide. Had the Welsh rigger team really beaten the New Zealanders the year before or was that try not a try? If not, by how many points would the South Africans defeat England this year? With difficulty was

the second mate of the *Umballa*, who hailed from Swansea, prevented from attacking the two of them.

"What a night!" said the chief, leaning across the table. "Ar havena' seen sooch a racket for years."

The third engineer nudged me.

"There's a bloke o'er t'other side o' tha room Ar'm goin' ta poonch tha head off. Ar've a groodge again' him ever since Sulina three voyages ago."

"Which one?" said I, turning in my chair.

"Ar'm no' quite sure," said the third thickly.

He gazed at the wall opposite, where hung lithographs of the King and Queen of Italy. Then he stood up, somewhat unsteadily, I fear.

"It don't matter anywa'. Ar'll heave a glaass ut him un' see what he says."

Mr. Harrington grabbed him by the arm.

"I shouldn't, Ed. Better sit down again. He'll be over here in a minute an' you can wallop the life out of him."

Strange to say the third engineer was perfectly satisfied.

"Ar'm ready for him . . . or any other. No weight, age, color or religion barred. Ar'm a Wesleyan meself from Gateshead, Mr. Harrington un' gentlemen, un' a total abstainer when Ar canna get owt ta drink. What 'ull ye have noo?"

But all this has nothing whatsoever to do with the story, save insomuch as it may help you to understand what manner of place Elisa's was and what manner of men drank at the small tables in the back room.



NOW there was in that crowd of seafaring men one, a small man in a gray suit, who had no earthly right to be there. For he was neither an engineer nor a mate, not even a steward or a cook; certainly not a sailor or a fireman. Deckhands and stokehole hands met with little or no encouragement at Elisa's.

Funnily enough it was Mr. Harrington who first noticed the presence of the little man in the gray suit.

Said he, "What the blazes is *that* doin' in here?"

At a table next ours sat five men. Four were from a Newry boat, Irishmen and acquaintances of our third engineer's. But the fifth was the small person in gray, who seemed ill at ease and rather frightened by his surroundings. That he was a stranger

to the four Irishmen was obvious from the over-polite, nervous way in which he refused to drink with them. I felt sorry for that little man for many reasons. He might possibly have been thirty-five years of age and he had, most assuredly, never before been out of England in his life.

Be that as it may, he should have had more sense than to venture into Elisa's by himself. Even I, an outsider also, but a passenger on a tramp steamer, knew better than that.

His face was pale and his hair light tow color. He had a tiny, foolish mustache and pink eyelids and a nose that twitched like a rabbit's, while his eyebrows were so nearly invisible that they gave him the appearance of being in a state of never ending surprise. Altogether, a most insignificant little man who blushed painfully when one of the girls who had been singing came around with a little wooden bowl for pennies.

Mr. Harrington grinned.

"I bet that little fool wishes he was anywhere but here. He's scared!"

A few minutes later he said: "See the eyes poppin' out of his head. All the same I'll bet he'll talk of his evenin' at Elisa's an' the crowd he met there as long as he lives. He'll be quite a big little man in the office, eh? Or perhaps it's neckties an' collars, or shoes!"

The chief engineer looked at his watch. "It's ten o'clock," he said. "Pretty near time to be goin' aboard."

"There's bound to be an awful shindy before long," said Mr. Harrington. "Let's get away now."

But the third engineer begged us to wait.

"Don't be unsociable," he said. "We'll a' coom' presently."

"Just this one song then," said Mr. Harrington. "That's all."

The room had grown very hot. The stamping of heavy feet had raised thick clouds of dust. The air was heavy with the smell of stale beer and tobacco smoke.

One of the girls was standing on the platform with a mandolin in her hand. She giggled at her audience, spoke to the girl at the piano, and then in a brief lull in the noise began to sing.

The song was "Santa Lucia," and the girl had a moderately tuneful voice, but we heard no more than the first verse. Four men in a corner by the door were quarreling with each other and with Elisa as to whether

or no they had settled for the last round of drinks.

"They've paid twice over prob'ly," said the second mate. "It's like Elisa's cheek to try that game on here."

By the time the dispute had settled itself—in Elisa's favor, presumably, judging from her display of offended virtue—the song was over and the singer had left the platform.

And from this point on I greatly fear that the narrative becomes obscure and incredible. Nevertheless, as it happened, so have I set it down: without exaggeration, yet hiding nothing.



AS THE girl who had been singing neared the curtain that draped the doorway a man jumped to his feet and took hold of her arm.

Said he, "Gimme a kiss!"

And if there were anything unusual about this, it was that he troubled to go through the formality of asking. Perhaps, thought I, this explained why Mr. Harrington should have straightened up so suddenly and muttered something under his breath.

The girl had no claims to being considered a beauty. She was plump, black-haired, sallow in complexion, with pouting lips and, when pleased, a giggle that irritated. Whether she felt indignant at the manner in which her song had been received, or whether she merely played a part, I know not, but she struggled to free herself.

"Let-ta me pass," she said.

"Not till I get my kiss, sweetheart," said the man, and he clasped her in his arms.

The third engineer of the *Umballa* leaned forward.

"Second engineer on the *Esmeralda* from Sunderland," he said. "Came in day before yesterday."

"Let-ta me go," said the girl indignantly, but the man—a broad-shouldered man with a red face and fair mustache—shook his head.

"No fear," he said. "Not till you give me a kiss."

And then, for no real reason, so far as we could see, the girl flared into a sudden wild anger, and stormed fiercely in Italian, while the onlookers laughed and clapped their hands and the music of the piano could not be heard for the din.

How it all would have ended I can not say. Judging from the usual course of events at

Elisa's, the plump, sallow girl would have relented in a moment or so, giggled and kissed the man as requested.

And then when all might have been smoothed over decently and without fuss, that small, insignificant, rabbit-faced little man in the gray suit must needs interfere and make trouble.

He was speaking to the big engineer in the space between the rows of tables before we even realized that he had left his seat. There was a sudden silence and we heard him say, "Let the young lady go, sir, if you please!"

Imagine a grown man saying a thing like that in a place like Elisa's!

"What the blazes is that little fool doin' there?" said a man near the platform.

"He's drunk, ain't he?" said another.

"Better go home to mother, sonny, before you're hurt." This from our second mate.

The little man tugged at the big engineer's sleeve.

"Let her go, sir," he said. "It's not a gentlemanly thing to tease a lady against her will."

"For Heavens sake!" said Mr. Harrington. "Gentlemanly bootlaces! He *is* crazy, I'm sure of it!"

The big engineer's face wore an expression of blank amazement. He turned his head and must have relaxed his hold, for at that moment the girl hit him on the cheek with all her strength. After that things did not seem quite so amusing as they had been.

"You devil!" said the big engineer. "I'll pay you for this."

And he—an Englishman, as were we all, save only those who were Scotch or Irish or Welsh—gripped her by the shoulders and shook her vigorously to and fro.

An uncomfortable stillness settled on the room. A joke is a joke, but this had gone far enough, even for Elisa's.

"Chuck it!" said somebody.

"Let the girl be!" said another.

But the little man in gray grabbed the big engineer by the wrist and the girl, weeping with anger, escaped to where Elisa raved in impotent fury.

And then—as I live, this is the truth—the little man struck the big engineer in the face.

Said the chief, "Mon, have Ar lived ta see sooch a feeble blow as thut!"

"The fool!" said Mr. Harrington, lighting his pipe.

I am afraid that the sympathies of the crowd were not with the little man in gray. To begin with, he should not have meddled with other people's affairs. We knew what the finish would be, of course. Or thought we did.

The big engineer grunted, shook his head, and with his open palm—an indignity in itself—boxed his opponent's ears, right and left, again and again.

"You little worm!" he said. "You interferin' little swab!"

Again the little man, his face very white, struck out; this time with better luck—or worse, perhaps. He hit the big engineer full on the nose, a fine, Roman nose, and the spectators roared their delight and joy that such miracles could be.

Nevertheless, this meant the complete and utter downfall of the little man in gray. The big engineer lashed out with his right and caught him on the point of the chin, sending him full length to the floor.

"That 'ull teach you!" said the engineer. "Now where's that girl? I want to speak to her."

What had gone before was nothing to what followed.



MR. HARRINGTON gave a little sigh, as one who saw much hard work ahead, pushed back his chair and stood up.

"Wait a bit!" said he.

We of the *Umballa* watched in helpless bewilderment as he forced his way out between the tables.

"Hullo, Harford!" he said easily. "You're at it again, eh?"

The big man swung around and glared at Mr. Harrington.

"What the . . . Who the blazes . . ."

He stopped short and a frightened look crept into his eyes.

"You're not . . ."

Again he broke off choking. He shivered and licked his lips.

"I've altered a bit, eh? You know me, though. Harrington's my name."

"It is, is it?" sneered the big man. "Well, you get to — out of here an' mind your own business! What prison let you out, eh?"

And he might bluster and use bold words, but he could not hide his terror.

The little man still lay on the floor where he had fallen, but somebody stooped down

and carried him into the bar out of harm's way.

Mr. Harrington smiled grimly. "Still fightin' people smaller than yourself, eh? I've not met you for a long time, Harford. Not since you were fourth engineer of the *Nagasaki*."

"An' you were chief, eh?" sneered Harford. "An' had to pack your bag an' go. You never got another ship, did you? What are you doin' now; trimmin' coal?"

"Just the same as ever, Harford," said Mr. Harrington, chuckling. "Just the same. You've not changed, at any rate! Better lookin', of course. Fine yeller mustache that, isn't it? Manners worse, perhaps. I'd an idea I'd taught you a few lessons on the *Nagasaki*. Pity you've forgot 'em!"

"What could you teach me? How to drink, I suppose. If I'd been fool enough to learn. You'd better leave me alone, Harrington, or you'll be sorry; blame sorry. We'll go our own ways. Understand! You've seen what I did to one man who couldn't mind his own business."

"Sock him, Bob!" said a voice. "Give the bleeder a wipe on the jaw!"

"Yes," said Mr. Harrington slowly. "I've seen. Remember the last time, Harford? That night at Pensacola when you were fourth on the *Nagasaki*!"

There was an almost breathless hush.

"Curse you!" said Harford. "What about it?"

"Remember what you told me then? Tell the crowd now. Go on! About the other girl!"

Harford stepped back a pace and said nothing. His face had lost its color and his clothes seemed to have suddenly grown too large for him.

"You're as big a coward as ever, aren't you?" said Harrington. "By Heaven! It makes me sick to look at you. Go on, put your fists up! You've just licked a man half your size; now try me. You're not afraid, are you? Before all these other fellers! Why don't you hit me? You weren't quite so backward that night at Pensacola, were you? Have you forgotten what that girl called you?"

"If you lay a finger on me, Harrington, I'll . . . I'll . . ." Harford's voice sounded shrill and uneven.

Harrington's chin was thrust forward. His arms hung by his sides. His shoulders

were hunched. "You'll tell the crowd about that night at Pensacola," he said, "or I will. Understand!"

Harford gave an inarticulate bellow, like some animal at bay, and hit out suddenly. Harrington moved his head the least little bit and smiled as the blow missed him.

But Harford made no further attempt to assert himself. His nerve had gone. To all intents and purposes he was whipped already. The crowd began to shout as he backed against a table. Harrington still smiled.

"Go on, Harrington!" shouted the chief engineer of the *Umballa*. "Go on, mon! Pitch into him!"

"Well, Mr. Harford!" said Harrington. "Well!"

Harford, hemmed in by jeering, scornful faces, looked one way and then another. Harrington very deliberately slapped him on the cheeks, first with his right hand, then with his left, then with his right again.

It was not a pleasant sight.

Unlike the small man in gray, Harford took each blow without trying to defend himself. The table against which he had been forced overturned; he lost his balance, staggered wildly and broke a chair. Probably he would have fallen, had not a thick-set, bearded man shoved him toward Harrington, who slapped him once more.

"What's the matter?" shouted the bearded man. "Hit him, you big booby, or this 'ull be your last voyage in my engine room. That's straight!"

Even this had no effect.

Harford uttered a little shriek, as if in pain, turned swiftly, and plunged through the crowd toward the door.

And that was the last of Mr. Harford, second engineer of the *Esmeralda*.



"WHERE'S my hat?" said Mr. Harrington. "Come on, chief, let's be goin'."

Then came Elisa, clamoring for vengeance.

Said she with a furious gesture at the floor:

"Look! Mine Godt! Who pay for damage? Da chair an' da glasses!"

Mr. Harrington scowled at her most unpleasantly.

"Damage! What damage, you old cow? Why don't you run the place decently, eh?"

He put his hand into his pocket and

brought out a half sovereign. "Here, take it an' keep your mouth shut."

Elisa clutched at the coin and showed no gratitude.

"Ever-a time you come dere drouble an' fightin'. I weesh you no come 'ere at all."

"I won't," said Mr. Harrington firmly. "It's a rotten hole an' you ought to be locked up. You would be in a civilized country. Come on, you chaps! Let's clear off!"

As we walked through the long bar, a man ran after us and touched Harrington on the arm. Said he:

"Mister, what did 'appen at Pensacola? Tell us, will yer?"

Mr. Harrington, who was really in a very bad temper, glared at him.

"That's none o' your business," he snarled. "Get out!"

We reached the quayside and breathed the cool breeze blowing across the crowded harbor.

"It's a fine night," said the second mate. "A fine thirsty night! Would any gentleman like a drink?"

And then the little man in the gray suit loomed up out of the darkness.

"I—I'd like to thank you," he stammered, "for—for——"

Mr. Harrington gazed at him with much disfavor.

"Here, you! Next time don't you try an' make trouble in a place like that!"

"But—but——"

The little man seemed to have a difficulty in speaking. He drew himself up.

"I—I couldn't sit still and watch that big bully ill treating a lady."

"A lady!" said Mr. Harrington scornfully. "That lady, as you call her, is a hanged sight better able to look after herself than you are. She wouldn't be in Elisa's else. Where do you come from?"

"London," said the little man meekly.

"Ever been away before?"

"No."

"Thought so," Mr. Harrington snapped. "Now, look here, mister. You're liable to be killed—sudden—carryin' on like this, meddlin' with other people."

"I wanted to rescue the girl," said the little man, "and so the——"

"Rescue the girl! Rescue the—— Lord love us! Couldn't you see the girl didn't want to be—rescued? Rescued from what? Listen! The best thing you can do is to

start back home at once. An' never you go into a place like Elisa's again without makin' your will. It's not meant for the likes of you anyway."

And Mr. Harrington made off, leaving the little man in gray staring after him in open-mouthed dejection.

Mr. Harrington was in such a very bad temper that the chief engineer and the third and the second mate disappeared before we arrived at the steep flight of steps leading down to the docks, near where the trolley cars turn into the tunnel.

"Where are the others?" I asked. "Hadn't we better wait?"

But Mr. Harrington stalked on in gloomy silence. We made our way slowly over the railway tracks, past huge mounds of coal and switching-engines to where the tramp steamers were moored in two long rows stern-on to the quay.

"Poor little devil!" said Mr. Harrington suddenly. "It's funny, isn't it? I was talkin' about it only this afternoon. Remember! Look at that little chap! He hadn't any business to do what he did. What

happens? He gets smacked like a small boy an' laughed at by everybody. Pluck's no good if you're as weak as a three-day-old kitten. Never interfere in what don't concern you, especially not in other people's quarrels."

"Yes," said I thoughtfully. "I understand. It will be a lesson to me never to interfere."

"But, Mr. Harrington," I asked, "what did *you* do in Elisa's just now?"

Mr. Harrington came to a halt, for we were abreast of the *Umballa*, and peered over the edge of the dock down into the black water lapping against the stones.

"What did I do?" he said in a puzzled way. "Me!"

Then he grunted.

"You want to know too much."

But what I do want to know is: What happened on board the *Nagasaki* at Pensacola, and why should Harford, the big engineer, have been terrified out of his life when he saw Mr. Harrington facing him under the gas jets at Elisa's?



THE TREASURE JAR

by Albert Payson Terhune

THE Treasure Jar was left behind when the party of *feringhee* (Europeans) broke camp and left the shade of the terebinth tree just outside of Banias.

The usual fringe of natives was drawn as close as Oriental village etiquette would

permit, about the camp's edge. And, as the *Howaji* cantered off, groom at side, in the wake of his muleteers, the human fringe contracted in a rush, into a swarm of shoving, squabbling Syrians that overran the camp site in search of any scrap of food or discarded raiment that might have been left there.

It was Abou-Nassar of Baalbek who discovered the Treasure Jar. Lithe and powerful was Abou-Nassar, for all his threescore years. And sharp were his eyes; trained to discern the farthest distant brown sheep of his flock, on the farthest brown Lebanon slope.

Therefore, while the rest were tugging at a disreputable pair of hopelessly torn *feringhee* khaki riding-breeches and snarling above a half eaten fowl, Abou-Nassar kicked aside a litter of straw through whose yellow interstices a dull gleam had caught his eye.

And thus did Abou-Nassar of Baalbek come upon the Treasure Jar.

There beneath the mused straw it lay. Evidently the *Howaji* had supposed the priceless treasure was safely packed away among his camp bundles. Or, far more likely, one of his muleteers had stolen it and, fearing arrest, had here hidden it until he could safely ride back and recover it.

Abou-Nassar's gorge rose at thought of any grown man choosing so absurdly simple a hiding-place. The thief must have known the camp site would be scoured the instant the *Howaji* departed.

"Allah the just hath deprived him of wit along with honesty," commented Abou-Nassar, as he carelessly tossed his *abieh* over the jar and stooped to pick up both cloak and treasure.

The crowd was melting. The scant booty of the camp had already been appropriated. Only two men remained as Abou-Nassar turned from the scene of his wondrous discovery.

One of these was Imbarak, village Sheik of Banias, a truculent and fat man. The other was a young Bedouin, who had paused at the village overnight on his way from Damascus back to his tribe's Winter camp among the Moab Mountains.

The Sheik was still pottering about, eyes to ground, seeking for some possible coin or ornament. The Bedouin, in crass scorn of his temporary hosts' greed, sat cross-legged and sphinx-like on one of the gnarled roots of the terebinth. He had taken no part in the scramble, but had viewed the whole proceeding with the half amused, half disgusted air of one who watches the scramble of a kennel of dogs for their early meal.

The desert Bedouin is ever the aristocrat

of the Orient. He does not squabble with starving *fellaheen* for torn garments and food scraps. Wherefore Basraoul of the tribe of El-Kanah sat aloof, scornful, inert, wondrously superior.



BUT Sheik Imbarak of Banias, raising his eyes from the fruitless search for dropped coins, chanced to note Abou-Nassar as the latter strolled unconcernedly away from the camp. Also, Sheik Imbarak of Banias observed that the brown-and-gray *abieh* which draped Abou-Nassar's meager form was unduly protuberant at the left side, just below the armpit.

Not five minutes earlier the Sheik had been annoyed by the fact that a wind gust had flapped the loose folds of that same *abieh* across his own eyes, as he and the Baalbek man had chanced to pass each other in the scramble.

Now, there were no loose folds. And there was a bulge. All of which called for investigation. And Imbarak negligently halted in front of Abou-Nassar.

"Oh, Abou-Nassar," he began sweetly, "may your day be happy."

"It is indeed happy," cooed the Baalbek man, "from seeing you."

"May your years," pursued the Sheik, "be a thousand."

"And may yours be one day longer, O Brother of Eagles," countered Abou-Nassar, "that I may not be on earth to learn of your death. And now I must go. I——"

"And now," courteously amended the Sheik, "let me honor myself by attending your departure."

With a wave of the hand he motioned to the other to take the precedence in the exodus. And in that same gesture he very awkwardly caught his outstretched hand in a corner of Abou-Nassar's *abieh*.

Hastily he drew back his hand. The move, complicated by Abou-Nassar's recoil, rent aside the all-hiding folds of the *abieh*, and revealed the Treasure Jar.

"Thief!" howled Sheik Imbarak, his face lighting in covetous amaze at his one glimpse of the treasure which Abou-Nassar hastily hid again. "You have stolen the heirloom of my house!"

"Offspring of a thousand generations of swine," courteously returned Abou-Nassar, "your house is a hovel and never held so priceless a thing. I bought this last night

at great price from the *Howaji*. I——”

He got no further. Sheik Imbarak had launched himself bodily upon the Baalbek man. So sudden was the onset that Abou-Nassar's balance was lost. Yet he clung desperately to his foe, the while shrieking maledictions upon him and upon his ancestors to the ninth and tenth generation.

To the ground, amid the camp *débris* they fell, interlocked in right unloving embrace. The Treasure Jar rolled unheeded to one side. When, five minutes later, the Sheik knelt upon his choked antagonist's chest and glared about in panting triumph, the treasure had vanished.

So had Basraoul, of the tribe of El-Kanah.

“He who follows a Bedouin follows the mists of morning,” quoted the Sheik; but not before he had made other and less philosophic observations that made Abou-Nassar's remarks sound like fulsome compliments.



BASRAOUL reached the Jordan with almost a paucity of adventure.

True, a group of *fellaheen*, seeing the Treasure Jar which he had taken out from under his *abieh* for inspection when he believed himself to be alone amid a clump of rocks, had fallen incontinently upon him. But they were quite unarmed. And when his curved knife had bitten into the rib cavity of one of them the rest gave back, with picturesque Oriental curses, and had sought, at safe range, to stone him to death.

But Basraoul, dodging among the boulders, took to his heels, holding the Treasure Jar in front of him lest a flying stone injure it. And by true desert fleetness of foot he had soon distanced the half fed villagers. A bruise on the head from a bit of limestone, and a badly torn *abieh*, were his total loss from the scrimmage.

Again, a fat merchant on a thin donkey, catching sight of the Treasure Jar, which the *abieh's* ripped folds would no longer hide, had called on Basraoul to halt and had enforced the order by drawing a flintlock pistol from his rotund belt. He then offered Basraoul a medjidie for the Jar. Basraoul laughed in his face. From beguiling, the merchant proceeded to threats. And once more his pudgy hand leveled the flintlock.

“Oh, Father of the Poor!” whined Basraoul, cringing beneath the lean donkey's very nose. “Spare your worthless servant's life that he may forever pray unto the

Prophet and Ali and Omar for your welfare.”

“Child of the desert dust!” thundered the merchant, “Turn over to me the prize you have stolen or the jackals shall sing your funeral song.”

“Oh, Protector of the Helpless,” whined Basraoul, “if indeed you must stoop to soil your hands with my blood, at least cock your pistol. You have forgotten to. And it would irk me——”

He said no more. For the merchant had glanced quickly down at the flintlock (which, by the way, was properly cocked) to verify the suppliant's words. And Basraoul of the El-Kanah promptly took advantage of this momentary lapse of vigilance to slap the pistol out of the fat hand that gripped it.

After which, picking up the weapon and readjusting its flint, he conscientiously proceeded to divest the indignant merchant of purse, turban, shoes and silken overdress. Then, finding the donkey too ill conditioned to be of use to him, he left it and passed on his way.

Apart from these two trifling occurrences, Basraoul's journey to the Jordan was quite uneventful. He would feel more at home, as do all the lawless, on the east bank of the River than on the west. The latter is too close to such slipshod patrol as the Pasha's various garrisons maintain; while the eastern country is still sufficiently No Man's Land to content the average Bedouin.

The Jordan was in flood, swollen and yellow from weeks of rain and from the melted snows of Tabor and Hermon. Basraoul would have liked to cross the River miles below, at the ford. But there was always the off chance that the despoiled merchant might meet a troop of cavalry or that the peasant whose side Basraoul's knife blade had explored might be weak-minded enough to die.

In the latter event, the next of kin, in the rôle of “blood avengers,” might even now be in conscientious pursuit. Altogether, the east bank was safer than the west. And the sooner he reached it the more prolonged was his life likely to be. Hence he decided to cross at the nearest point.

Swimming is a rare accomplishment among the desert-born. Basraoul possessed it only in the most rudimentary degree. And to cross a swirling, *débris*-tossed river in this way was quite beyond him. Yet the

need of saving not only his life but his treasure flogged him on.



STRIPPING, he rolled his clothes into a compact bundle, the core of which was the precious Treasure Jar. This bundle he bound about his neck, most securely, with the *ikal* (horsehair cord) of his headgear. Then, moving along the bank until he found a log of driftwood light enough to manipulate, yet sufficiently large to support him, he shoved the log out into the stream.

Hanging on by both arms, he kicked vigorously. The eddying, yellow current twisted the log almost loose from his grasp. It whirled him and the wood like a chip, now submerging both, now tossing them half out of water.

Buffeted, ducked, strangled, Basraoul of the El-Kanah kicked away for dear life; seeking, in momentary lulls of the rush, to shape some sort of course to the eastern shore.

So, inch by inch, he fought his way. And ever he was borne downstream. A half mile from where he had entered the water he was tossed at last, a half senseless bit of flotsom, against a sand spit that ran out far into the river from the east bank.

Abandoning his log, Basraoul lay, spread-eagle, on the brown sand, the yellow water swirling about his legs, while he slowly regained breath and strength. His first conscious movement was to his neck, to make certain the priceless bundle was still there.

Then, strength returning to his supple young body, he rose to his feet. And the next moment he was knee-deep in sand. For the brown promontory chanced to be a quicksand.

The man at once threw himself backward at full length, arms wide outspread. And in this position, by muscle-racking effort, he managed to pull one bare leg after the other from the grip of the sand.

As long as he lay thus, offering as wide a surface of resistance as possible, he was in no instant danger of sinking; though very slowly his body had begun to nestle deeper into its warm, shifting bed.

Behind was the River. In front was a fifteen-foot stretch of quicksand. Above blazed the white hot sun. Basraoul of the El-Kanah had known several happier moments in the twenty-five years of his life.

"Thy lips are like a sword. Thy brow is a snow cloud. Thy hair is of woven midnight. Thine eyes are the stars.

Search my heart, O Beloved, and in it thou shalt find naught but love for thee!"

The tune was far less beautiful than the words. In fact, in Occidental ears there was no tune at all. A rough voice intoned the love song in a doleful minor, punctuated with falsetto squeaks. But to Basraoul the voice was as the voice of an angel—the Prophet's own Angel of Deliverance.

The imprisoned man cautiously lifted his head. The motion, slight as it was, sent his body an inch lower into the sand. Along the bank rode a man on an uncurried brown horse. He was making his way southward, and, after the native custom, was beguiling his journey with melody—such as it was.

At a glance Basraoul had recognized the rider's type. He was one of the tribeless folk, outlaws as a rule, who call themselves Bedouins and yet owe homage to no Sheik or Emir. Their home is portable, their life nomadic, their occupation horse-trading and highway robbery.

In ordinary circumstances, helpless and unable to get at his weapons, Basraoul would have shunned such a character as he would have shunned a rock viper. Now, however, he hailed him excitedly.

"*Ohél!*" he shouted, "Give aid, O Brother of Giants!"



BOTH rider and song halted abruptly. The horseman glanced about him, then saw the prone figure in the quicksand. Even in that stark moment Basraoul noted that his close-set eyes passed over the prostrate body and rested in genuine interest on the big bundle bound to the stripped man's neck.

"Give aid!" repeated Basraoul. "Give aid, and Allah the Merciful shall reward you tenfold. What says the Koran? 'To him who shall preserve the life of—'"

"I know what says the Book," interposed the stranger indifferently. "But the rewards of Allah are apt to wait overlong. Can you offer me no better reason for wasting time and risking life? That bundle about your neck, O my brother, toss it to me and for gratitude I shall save you."

"You speak to a man, not to a donkey of the market square!" furiously retorted Basraoul. "Naught for naught. Since you ask pay for doing an act that Allah will

recompense, then I too will recompense you. And amply. But not until I stand on firm ground."

"As you will!" shrugged the rider; and touched the corners of his shovel-stirrups to the sides of his rough-coated horse.

Off cantered the beast, and the horseman broke again into his tuneless song; while Basraoul lay and howled after him a volley of the grotesquely horrible curses that only the Orient can devise. Then, as song and hoofbeat died away, the luckless Bedouin fought back both wrath and fear and made ready to die as befitted a tribesman of the El-Kanah.

The Treasure Jar and other impedimenta made the bundle heavy. And, bound about his neck as the burden was, his head and the parcel both began to settle lower in the sand. Basraoul carefully raised one hand to his throat and undid the bundle's cord. Then he laid it beside him, flat side downward that it might longer resist the suction.

The exertion had done little to help his body. And now an idea—desperate, perhaps idiotic—came to him. The sands were evidently not of the most treacherous form. They had supported his weight when properly adjusted to them. Why should he not seek to move toward the bank? True, the action might sink him, should he chance upon a softer, less compact section than that on which he now lay. Yet it was better than to die by inches.

Moving swiftly, yet with what caution he might, he twisted his body so that he lay chest downward. Then, still spread-eagle, he wriggled, crablike, shoreward.

The feat was less difficult and far less perilous than he had supposed. The sand that had partially supported him when he lay moveless bore his weight even more easily when he was in motion.

True, an occasional indiscreet move would send elbow or knee dangerously deep below the surface; and each time he paused to throw his bundle a foot or two in front of him the extra leverage would threaten to bog him down.

Still, he made progress; slow, exhausting, but steady progress. And, after an eon of time, he found himself within arm's length of the hard clay of the bank.

With a last heave he pushed the bundle upward so that it rested on the firm bank. The move had engulfed his knees again, and he had much ado to free himself. At

length he was able to reach out and, digging his nails into the springy, dead grass roots at the bank's edge, to pull by main force his legs from the sand's embrace.

Even as he braced himself for this final tug, the clatter of unshod hoofs thudded along the bank. Looking up, Basraoul saw the man on the uncurried brown horse, bearing down upon him at a gallop.

From a near-by copse, where apparently he had watched the captive's struggles, the rider had burst. And, before he could reach the spot, Basraoul had read his intent and had shrieked aloud in impotent horror.

As the naked Bedouin drew his body out from the clutch of the sand and part way on to the bank, the rider stooped, without slackening for an instant his horse's speed; snatched up the bundle that lay not six inches from Basraoul's gripping fingers; and thundered off with the prize on his saddle bow.

It was a simple trick of horsemanship, an absurdly easy theft and a beautiful exhibition of judgment as to time and distance.

Looking back over his shoulder, the stranger flashed a complacent, friendly smile at the struggling Basraoul and in derision tossed away his own ragged *abieh*.

Basraoul crawled out on the hard bank and crouched there, gasping and cursing. He was wholly insane with rage—partly that he was tricked, partly that he had been robbed without striking a blow, but most of all that he had lost the Treasure Jar.

It was this last stinging reflection that dragged him to his feet and turned his helpless, mousing rage to cold, sane determination. He staggered over to where the robber's cast-off *abieh* lay, picked it up and wrapped it about his own bare body. Then, stooping over, he carefully studied the horse's hoofprints in the clay; studied them until, with his desert-bred skill, he could have tracked that rough brown horse through a herd a thousand strong.

After which, weaponless, afoot, clad only in the discarded ragged cloak, Basraoul of the El-Kanah calmly set forth on his search for the well armed, well mounted thief who had stolen the Treasure Jar and his other booty.

And late on the night of the third day Basraoul found him.



FOOTSORE, sick with hunger, but sustained by that ice-cold rage, Basraoul of the El-Kanah tracked his enemy to a tumbledown shepherd hut on the lower slopes of Mount Nebo.

There, on his leisurely eastward journey toward Arabia (for it was plain he had feared no pursuit from so helpless a victim), the thief had halted for the night. And there he roused from sleep to see by the faint moonlight Basraoul creep in through the crumbling doorway of the adobe hut.

The robber thrust out a hand for his pistol that lay beside him. But he did not secure it. Basraoul, snarling and spitting like an angry cat, was at his throat before his fingers could close on the weapon.

There, in the elusive moonshine, they rolled, fighting, across the earthen floor of the hut; caroming against its dilapidated wall; crashing into the thief's heap of clothes and plunder in one corner.

Back and forth they tussled; gripping, pummeling, biting, butting. There was no science, no self-defense; nothing but aggressive, stark battle lust; the knowledge that "kill or be killed" was the one rule of their combat.

Basraoul had been tricked. To a Bedouin, that must be paid for by a life. The thief knew what mercy to expect and that his one chance lay in slaying before he should be slain.

Blindly, tensely, the fight waged. The belongings of the thief were by this time strewn from one end of the room to the other, tripping and impeding the combatants. Once Basraoul felt the back of his forearm knock against the cold side of the Treasure Jar, and he thrilled with unreasoning rapture that it was still within reach and not sold nor restolen.

The next moment, in a sudden shift of grips, the back of Basraoul's head came into smashing contact with the crazy door jamb, half stunning him. The dark hut was illumined by a shower of multi-hued stars.

His grasp loosened, momentarily; and his whole body relaxed. Before he could regain his powers after that numbing impact, his foe had gained the upper hand. The robber's grip was in his throat. The robber's knee was in the pit of his stomach. The long, hard fingers were biting into his windpipe, strangling him.

Out flew Basraoul's hands at random, beating the ground with returning con-

sciousness. And at the gesture something cut one of his fingers to the bone. The pain was a delight. For he knew he had encountered the blade of a knife—the curved, razor-sharp blade of his own knife which the robber had stolen along with the bundle's other contents.

Basraoul gripped the horsehide hilt, with its trio of embossing blue beads. And, through the smother of agony, of strangulation, of still half benumbed brain, he struck.

He knew where and how to smite and just how to manipulate that crooked little blade when once it had penetrated to its destination. The grip on his throat fell away. Basraoul shook off the wriggling body above him; then he scrambled to his feet and very deliberately finished his task.

Groping and finding a tinder box amid the floor's wreckage, he struck a light and assured himself that the Treasure Jar was unharmed; also that the rest of his belongings were within reach. Among other things he came across several cakes of unleavened bread and a small skin half full of crude Stora wine.

He ate and drank ravenously. Then, with a grunt of contentment, he lay down beside the very still robber and slept like a tired baby until daylight.

Twenty-four hours later, appareled in a set of garments that had recently formed part of three wardrobes, and laden with such plunder as had been collectively the merchant's, the robber's and his own, Basraoul rode a rough-coated brown horse into the camp of the El-Kanah among the southern foothills of Moab, southeast of the Dead Sea. Wrapped in a torn *abieh*, on his saddle bow was a bulky object which he showed to no man until he received permission to enter the tent of the Emir.

Then, for the delection of his tribal liege lord, did Basraoul unwrap the *abieh* and disclose his Treasure Jar.

Five minutes later he made his dejected exit from the tent. The Emir, by virtue of his rank and by his power of life and death over his tribesmen, had claimed the treasure as his.

As the heartsick Basraoul left the royal presence, he noted dispiritedly that guests were riding into camp, and that one of them was a white man; in fact, the very *Howaji* whose camp site he had seen looted near Baniyas less than a week before.

A passing servant of the Emir's stopped long enough to tell the newly returned

wanderer that the *Howaji* was an *Inglese* of rank who was touring Syria under protection of letters from the heaven-born Padi-shah—might he lie where rose-leaves would fall on his tomb!—in Constantinople.

The news did not interest Basraoul. Indeed, the sight of the *Inglese Howaji* revived bitter memories of the precious Trésure Jar so unaccountably left in the latter's camp at Banias.

The *Inglese*, by the way, made the following entry in his diary that night:



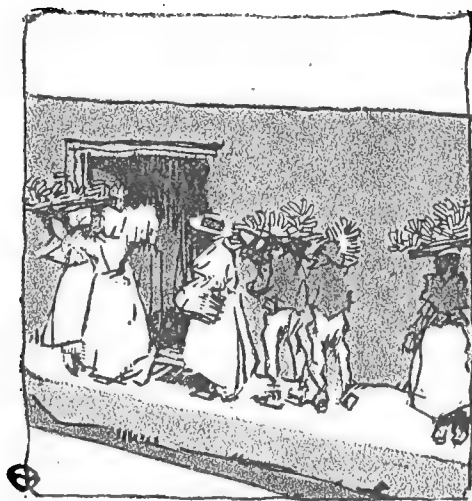
REACHED camp of El-Kanah this morning. Emir a hospitable if haughty old chap. Odd incident. (Work it into a story some time.) He admired my revolver—first he had ever seen—and offered to swap for it the choicest

treasure in his camp. I was curious to see what kind of treasure he would regard as "choice," knowing that the natives' ideas on such a subject are apt to differ from ours. So I asked him to trot it out.

I could hardly keep my face straight when he produced it.

First I thought he was joking. Then I realized he wasn't. For I remember hearing that to these desert-dwellers, a metal receptacle for water or for wine is something to sell their souls for. I don't know just why, but it is so. And I saw the natives, at one camp of mine, quarrel like magpies over even an empty wine bottle.

So the old fellow was probably acting in perfectly good faith in offering me a battered, empty, ten-gallon kerosene can in exchange for the coveted revolver. I discarded an "empty" like it not a week ago. But I fancy he was guying me when he said the thing had already cost two or three lives. Even a Syrian surely couldn't be so silly as to risk life for such a bit of junk.



A BOOM IN BANANAS by George Shepherd

MR. ROBERT CLARKE sat at a small table on the sidewalk in front of the Gran Hotel Internacional and nursed some very unpleasant reflections. He had indeed good reasons to be down-hearted, for he was nearly penniless and several thousand miles from home. Still young Clarke looked the situation in the face with comparative calm, probably because it was by no means the first time he had found himself in a like predicament.

Though he had the experience to qualify at a half dozen trades or callings, Clarke's true profession was globe-trotting, but because he was not blessed with an independent income, he occasionally ran into difficulties in its practise. For instance (and Clarke really regarded it as a "for instance"), here he was in the little Central American port of Aguacate without money or job, and no obvious prospect of getting either.

Clarke crossed one immaculately white-trousered leg over the other and, tilting his

chair back against the adobe wall, surveyed the water front of Aguacate with a cheerful smile. His varied experience had taught him that the less money one has the more cheerful should be one's manner and the sprucer one's clothes.

Across from the hotel, moored to the single wharf the harbor boasted, was a big white steamer with four slender green streams flowing up its side and trickling down into the hold. For thirty hours the ship had been gorging itself with bananas and now was beginning to show signs of repletion. But already another steamer had appeared and lay anchored in the harbor, awaiting its turn to slide up to the lunch counter and tuck away thirty thousand bunches of the unripe fruit.

Clarke let his gaze travel up and down the somnolent main street of the town and then back to the steamer.

"Bananas," he reflected, "seem to be the sole industry of this community. Hence, they must be the original source of all its wealth. Therefore let us investigate bananas."

As he picked his way across the muddy street and strolled casually out on the wharf, he looked the perfect picture of a rich tourist whose eccentricity leads him into out-of-the-way places, though the fluent Spanish with which he addressed a whining beggar who got in his way was not at all of the tourist variety. On the wharf he stood for a few minutes watching the four lines of half naked negroes who made human conveyer belts from the loaded cars to the steamer's hold. Pendent, as it were, to each of these lines was a single important-looking negro who, scrutinizing the bunches as they were passed from hand to hand, would occasionally pounce on one and haughtily order it to be carried to one side.

Inspecting the heap of these rejected bunches, Clarke saw that they had been turned back either because the bananas were too green or because the bunch itself was broken or imperfect, though most of the bananas on it might be good enough. Then he sauntered about the wharf, his keen eyes taking in all the details of the scene.

He admired with the discernment of knowledge the way the empty cars were taken away and, with a minimum of delay, full ones shunted into their place. He observed the neat system of double checking

the count of bunches loaded, and noted the admirable disposition of the laborers, enough men everywhere, but nowhere a single one too many.

"They evidently have this part of it down too fine to need any more talent," he said to himself.



HOWEVER, it was well to get some first hand information, so presently he struck up a conversation with the perspiring young American who was in charge.

"You're shooting 'em in pretty fast, aren't you?" Clarke began.

"Oh, so so," was the gratified reply. "We'll have her done in a few hours now. Then we change ships and begin on that other fellow out there. We never stop loading for long on this wharf."

"Does she belong to your outfit, too?" queried Clarke pleasantly.

The foreman looked at him with a touch of good-natured scorn.

"There isn't a banana loaded here that don't belong to the Atlas Fruit Company," he announced emphatically. "What's more," he added, "there isn't one even grown in the whole benighted country that don't belong to us."

Clarke was visibly impressed.

"Where do they come from mostly?" he asked.

"Oh, back in the country. Nothing grows within ten miles of this forsaken town," was the answer as the young man rushed off to take the numbers of a string of cars that had just been kicked in from the yard.

When he came back again Clarke pointed to the pile of rejected bananas.

"What do you do with those?" he asked.

"Rejects? Oh, nothing. There's no market for 'em here to speak of. A few of the green ones we save for a later boat, but mostly they're a loss. Don't amount to much though."

Clarke made a rough count of the heap. Some three hundred bunches it contained. Then he walked back to the hotel, thinking very hard. If one could get three hundred bunches of bananas for nothing and sell them for something, he thought, hotel bills would cease to worry. But to sell bananas when no one wished to buy appeared at first sight to be a matter of some slight difficulty.

Meanwhile hotel bills ran on. To pacify the landlord of the Internacional at the end of the week promised to be a matter of overwhelming difficulty. Clarke resumed his seat in front of the hotel and gave the two problems his undivided attention.

It was late in the afternoon. The fierce heat of the day was giving way to cooling breezes from the sea, and the street was filling with the usual many-hued throng. But Clarke had no eyes for what was going on around him. He could do nothing but think of those perfectly good bananas that were being thrown away every day and wondering how he might manage to make them pay his hotel bill. Presently he was aroused from his study by a touch on his arm, and looking up he saw a bare-footed urchin holding out a piece of paper.

"Your luck, señor?" besought the boy.

"Beat it," growled Clarke impatiently, as he recognized the inevitable Spanish-American lottery ticket. Hardly had the boy gone before an able-bodied man whiningly implored him to buy.

"Two thousand pesos, señor. Here for one peso is the ticket which will win you two thousand."

"Scoot!" said Clarke in vigorous colloquial Spanish.

Then within five minutes he was approached by three more boys, two old women and another man. Finally he disgustedly expended one of his few remaining dollars on a ticket.

"It seems I was wrong about bananas being the only industry of this town," he mused. "Here is another which is very flourishing. Now, if there were only some local Morgan to combine the two he would——"

Clarke sprang to his feet. The inspiration had come!



MR. THOMAS MURDOCK, the stout, jovial, business-like manager of the Atlas Fruit Company, had finished his morning's work and was preparing to go to his midday breakfast when he received a visit from a slender, pleasant-looking young American. From his immaculate clothes and easy, agreeable manner Mr. Murdock took him to be some rich tourist, and so, greeting him cordially, the manager began to make polite conversation about Aguacate, its advantages and drawbacks, and what the Atlas Company was doing to in-

crease the former and to offset the latter. But at the first pause Clarke corrected his mistaken impression.

"Yes, Mr. Murdock," he said, speaking with delightful assurance, though quite without impudence. "I think Aguacate is a very pleasant place indeed; so pleasant that I would like to stay here if you will give me a job."

He sat back in his chair with a confiding, friendly smile.

"Ah—ah," gasped the manager, his deferential manner slipping away. "Why, of course you understand our organization is quite complete. What is your line?" he added, not wishing to be too brusque.

"Anything," replied Clarke calmly. "You see," he went on in answer to the other's look of astonishment, "I speak Spanish, know how to deal with the natives and am fairly intelligent. I think," he concluded confidently, "I would be easily worth two hundred and fifty gold a month to you—and expenses, of course."

Mr. Murdock made no attempt to hide the smile that spread over his broad face.

"My dear young man," he said with patient indulgence; "you have a curious idea of the way such companies as ours are run, or you wouldn't make such an extraordinary proposition."

"Oh, no, I haven't, Mr. Murdock," rejoined Clarke, with a pleasantness that kept his statement from seeming to be a contradiction. You see, it's not my proposition that is extraordinary, but I who am an extraordinary man. I'm well worth the amount I'm asking you. Naturally though, you don't believe it. So I'm going to prove it to you."

"Yes, yes," said Mr. Murdock, still smiling.

"What do you get for your rejected bananas?" asked Clarke.

"Practically nothing. Why?" was the sharp response. It was a sore subject with the manager.

"Because," answered Clarke with quiet assurance, "I intend to sell them for you. Now, if I make a market for these bananas, which you have been dumping in the sea—if I can get the price up to five cents (silver I mean, of course) for each and every banana, will you give me a two-hundred-fifty-dollar job?"

"Oh, come now. Why not say three

hundred dollars?" replied Murdock with heavy facetiousness.

"All right. We'll negotiate on that basis," said Clarke seriously. "Will you give it to me?"

"Yes!" roared Murdock. "Also I'll give you a job if you can make it rain twenty-dollar gold pieces or take all the salt out of the ocean. Wait a minute," he added suspiciously. "You're not going to buy a few stems yourself at that price and then say you've made a market."

Clarke looked the manager squarely in the eye as he said:

"I'll give you my word that I won't buy a single banana myself or have one bought for me. I'm going to play this game square. First, because that's the way I'm built; second, because you wouldn't give me a job if I didn't; and third, because I haven't yet seen a job in the world that's worth being crooked to get."

He paused. Mr. Murdock was no longer smiling.

"But I want you to promise," continued the young man, "to refrain from swamping the market when the price starts up, and not to give away any bananas, or sell 'em for a fraction less than you can get for 'em. Merely sell the usual number of rejected bananas and don't let any others be brought into town. Also don't make any contracts for future delivery. Just sell 'em every day for the best price you can get."

Murdock reflected cautiously.

"I don't see how you can sting me anywhere on that," he said finally. "All right. I'll agree to it."

"It's all understood then," said Clarke rising. "Now then, Mr. Murdock, will you do me the honor of breakfasting with me?"

"Inasmuch as lunacy is not catching, I don't mind if I do," replied Murdock, who had begun to be intensely curious as to who and what this strange young man was.

When they reached the hotel Clarke suggested that before they went into the dining-room they sit outside for a few minutes and have a cooling drink. For this purpose he selected the table next to the one where the Governor of the Province always took his daily *aperitivo*.



DON ANTONIO ROBLES was the Governor of the City and Province of Aguacate and as such his word was law therein; that is, unless it happened

to be opposed to the wishes of the Atlas Fruit Company; in which case Don Antonio always discovered that the word had been spoken in error and gracefully retracted it. In appearance he seemed to be a sort of a nucleus from which shot out a number of long, slender protuberances, all terminating in sharp, finely drawn-out points. He wore patent leather shoes with long, sharp toes; his cutaway coat ended in spiked tails behind and revealed an acute V of bright silk waistcoat in front; he had slender tapering fingers tipped with long, carefully tended nails, and his heavy mustache and imperial ran out into waxed points as long and sharp as a woman's hat pin. Even the flashing glances from his black eyes seemed to have sharp points.

In fact it may as well be said quite plainly before we go any further, that sharpness was not merely a physical attribute of his Excellency. He could discern anything that might be turned to the advantage of Antonio Robles a very long way off. Also he always met such half way. He was a gallant man and it would have distressed him infinitely if good fortune had ever become footsore because of his failure to go down the road to meet her. Abandoning metaphor in the interest of absolute clarity, let us say that Don Antonio was on the make.

The same day that Clarke breakfasted with Mr. Murdock the Governor received a call of respect from the pleasant young American, whom his Excellency remembered he had seen breakfasting with the *administrador* of the great Atlas Company. Clearly, the young man was a person of some distinction, so the Governor was affability itself and had no hesitancy in accepting Clarke's invitation to dine with him at his hotel the same evening. The event proved the Governor's wisdom. He was entertained as befitted his rank, and enjoyed a specially ordered dinner which produced such a pleasant glow in the gubernatorial bosom that resultant public show of friendliness established Clarke's credit for another two weeks.

Clarke called again on the Governor the next morning. This time, it appeared, there was some question of business to be discussed, for a private interview was accorded him which lasted two hours. When he left Don Antonio himself accompanied the young man to the street door and sent a policeman for a cab. As the Governor

stalked back to his private office, every underling he passed could tell from his courteous salutation and the way he twirled the waxed ends of his mustache, that his Excellency was in the best of humors.

In the evening the sensation was sprung and the little city of Aguacate sat up very straight. The newspapers blazoned it forth in full-page headlines; a multitude of hand bills proclaimed it, and a hundred leather-lunged negroes shouted it through the streets. Another lottery had been started. No, not merely another lottery, for that were a feeble way to describe the great and grand and magnificent enterprise that, with the consent of the Government, was about to be launched by the talented young American, Don Roberto Clarke. It was something stupendous, staggering. It taxed one's credulity by its munificence. Moreover, unlike all other lotteries, the winning of the prize depended on the acumen of those who bought tickets. A single grand capital prize of a thousand pesos was the only one offered, and to win it one had merely to invest five infinitesimal cents and guess correctly the total number of tickets which would be sold before the lottery closed in two weeks' time.

In order to have an effective check on the number of tickets sold, each and every participant deposited for each and every ticket he bought, one banana. These were kept in locked and sealed rooms and counted when it was all over. Each guess was to be secret and would be kept under seal, being first stamped with the guesser's thumb print to make sure of identifying it.



AGUACATE gasped, then laughed, then gasped again and began to wonder whence and for what reason this insanity had been visited on it. But above all it was interested. The marvelous lottery was the topic of conversation in every café and on every street corner. From the Hotel Internacional emanated the rumor that it was another mad freak of the North American millionaire who, drawing a comfortable income from armor plate mills, sallied forth and preached universal disarmament, and attempted to substitute bookshelves for bombshells in world politics. In the Fonda de America Central, down the street, it was whispered that the whole thing was an advertisement for a new brand of soap. But whatever it was, the lottery

obtained the undivided attention of Aguacate.

In the morning further details were made public. A vacant warehouse near the waterfront had been lent by the Government to be used as the lottery offices. The Governor had detailed three lieutenants of police to be in attendance and guard the interests of the public. The three daily papers had appointed representatives who were to constitute a committee of inspection and supervision.

To prevent any one from counting the number of bananas delivered and putting in the winning guess at the last moment, most elaborate precautions had been adopted. There were three separate receiving rooms, each under the supervision of the police and the inspecting board. The purchasers of chances in the contest would go into any one of these and turn in their sealed guesses together with the proper number of bananas and the corresponding amount of money.

The bananas would be dropped into sealed bins and every twenty-four hours the money taken in each room would be deposited in the bank in a sealed, uncounted package. Inspectors and checkers were to be shifted from one room to another in such a way that it would be impossible for any one man to keep track of the receipts. (Clarke had estimated that by constant personal supervision he could hold down the amount of grafting all this would permit to not more than twenty-five per cent.).

The official circular stated that it would be well for all contestants to carry their bananas into the offices in their pockets, or in bags, boxes, or what not, so that it would be impossible for any one to stand outside and count the number going in. Lastly it was provided that in the event of more than one person guessing the winning number, he who had "surrounded" it by the greatest number should be the winner. That is, say the number was 23,475. If one man guessed 23,475 only and another had guessed all the numbers from 23,470 to 23,479, the latter would win. But he in turn would lose to any one who had guessed all the way from 23,400 to 23,499. This arrangement Clarke had designed with a view to appealing to heavy speculators.

All this elaboration convinced Aguacate that whatever motives lay behind this

strange lottery, the scheme was straight as far as it went. Then too, was not the American who was promoting it the personal friend of their Governor? Had not his Excellency publicly dined with him? What more could be wanted?

Five cents is a small sum, and every man, woman and child in the town determined to have a shot at that thousand pesos. At first it was easy enough to obtain the bananas. The provision dealers quickly sold their small stocks; half a dozen hills of bananas growing in back yards or *patios* yielded their fruit, and then the crowd drifted out on the wharf to get the bananas that were rejected from the steamer that was loading.

It happened that the last shipments from the farms up-country had been especially well selected, so that there had been very few bunches culled out. But over such as there were presided a brisk young American who sold them off to the first comers at a cent apiece. As the pile diminished and it became apparent there would not be enough to go around, some capitalist in the back of the crowd offered fifteen cents for ten.

Immediately the young man jumped the price to a cent and a half apiece, and finally disposed of the last bunch at two cents. Then the unsatisfied crowd wanted some of the perfect bunches sold, but the young man explained that those bananas brought the Company two reales each in New York, so it was clearly impossible. Meanwhile a cordon of hard-fisted sailors prevented depredations.



THE lottery offices opened at noon and business started off with a rush.

Every barefooted ragamuffin in town was clamoring to turn in his five cents, drop his banana in the bin and register a guess. At the end of the afternoon Clarke, judging both from the number of people who had passed in and the bananas that had been sold on the wharf, estimated that two thousand chances had been sold. This was not altogether satisfactory, for he had to sell twenty thousand to make up the capital prize and at least another ten thousand to cover expenses and defalcations. Still there were thirteen days left, and his ingenuity was not yet exhausted.

The following morning there was another crowd waiting to buy bananas on the wharf, but now that the first rush of their enthusi-

asm had subsided, they were more canny. All the fruit on hand was sold at a uniform price of a cent, and those who were unable to buy any wisely decided to wait until the next day. There was a noticeable falling off in the business done in the lottery offices.

Clarke was a very preoccupied young man when he went home that evening. He sat on a balcony in front of his room and between periods of casting up expenses and estimating receipts, he stared moodily across the square at the dingy municipal jail, a foul, revolting place, even when seen from the outside.

Next day it was the same story. The market held firm at a cent and sales were not over fifteen hundred. Clarke saw that something must be done. First, he had a brief interview with his friend the Governor. Then he looked up the young wharf superintendent and found out that all American employees of the Atlas Company were given a pass to the States and back once a year. Clarke decided he would have to forego his first annual vacation and the same evening it was announced that a first class round trip ticket to New Orleans would be added to the thousand peso prize, also a free pass to the municipal opera house, good for the entire year. This place of amusement, devoted principally to moving picture shows, was under the administrative charge of his Excellency the Governor.

This extra inducement had a prompt effect. Bananas opened next morning at a cent and a half, quickly jumped to two and a half and closed at three. Clarke followed up this advantage by a statement that one quarter of the profits of the enterprise were to be given to the Hospital of Sta. Maria. This exhibition of generosity met with enthusiastic public approval, and particularly warm in its praise was *La Independencia*, the strongest of the three local newspapers. By pure coincidence (known possibly to Clarke) the editor's brother was secretary of the hospital, and for a long time had been unable to obtain a well deserved raise in salary because the institution did not have sufficient funds.

Thereafter the *Independencia* devoted a whole page of every issue to booming the lottery. The editor appealed not only to the sporting blood of his fellow citizens, but to their generosity, their chivalry, and their love of country. He urged fathers to buy

chances for their children, husbands for their wives, lovers for each other. He continually reminded his readers that the more chances they took the greater were their prospects of winning.

Under the influence of this campaign the price of bananas during the next week fluctuated about three cents, but not a single sale was made for more than three and a half. Meanwhile the close of the lottery was approaching. Clarke, outwardly calm and debonair, was torn with anxiety. Vainly he cast about for new inducements, but to find them without involving himself in more expense than he dared to incur seemed to be impossible. All the time, because he recognized that the least breath of suspicion would ruin the whole enterprise, he was employing all the very considerable resources of his ingenuity to keep clerks and checkers and inspectors so thoroughly mixed up that no one of them could have more than the vaguest idea what the takings were. By dint of shifts and changes he managed to get them so confused that it would have taken a combination of no less than six men to arrive at anything like an estimate. But at the same time he did his best to keep track of the receipts himself, for that loathsome jail had not been moved but was still in plain view from his balcony.

As the time approached for the closing of the lottery and the final reckoning, Clarke grew more and more nervous. He had no appetite, he slept badly, and he would walk around the square to escape going by the jail. He had almost given up hopes of getting the price of bananas to five cents, and the accomplishment of his other task, that of raising enough money to cover the expenses of the lottery, though not impossible, was still very far from assured. Then too, if he failed to work the market up and so did not get his job with the Atlas Company, how was he going to get the pass to New Orleans and back?

The morning of the eleventh day he went down to the wharf and watched the young man sell half his stock of rejects at two cents and then dump the rest in the shark-infested water. Murdock was playing fair enough, but it was no use apparently. With gloom in his heart Clarke went back to the lottery office and wrote an impassioned appeal for insertion in the *Independencia*.



ACROSS the street from the lottery was the shop of one Isidoro Malditas, dealer in clothing and sundries and a man of wealth, substance and sharp practises. There were very few chances to make a fat profit that ever got by Don Isidoro. At first he had taken no interest in the lottery beyond regarding it with a certain suspicion. But as day after day he saw the inhabitants of Aguacate stream into its doors, he grew less incredulous of the ability of the enterprise to pay the thousand peso prize. Noting the daily trips of the messengers to the bank, he at last became convinced that the money was worth going after.

Finally he considered what a fine thing it would be for him to go to New Orleans for nothing and pick out a stock of goods for his shop. It would be worth thousands of dollars to him. Isidoro made up his mind to go into the lottery. But there was to be no haphazard guessing for him. He was a gentleman who gambled only on certainties.

In his efforts to prevent any one from getting a line on the receipts of the lottery Clarke had not neglected the one obvious and accurate source of information; namely, the records of the Atlas Fruit Company showing the number of bananas sold. At his request Mr. Murdock had issued stringent orders as to the secrecy of these records and had forbidden any of the clerical force to enter the lottery.

But in the office of the chief accountant of the Atlas Company there was employed a youth named Clarence Aubrey. He was not, as you might suspect from the name, the youngest son of a lord. On the contrary, he was a saddle-colored Jamaican with an exaggerated English accent and a liking for loud socks, whom a kindly Colonial Administration had educated to the point where he was quite useless as a farm hand and not much good for anything else.

Clarence's duties were to sweep the office, run errands and lick stamps. The chief accountant himself was a man from Mississippi, who had very pronounced views concerning the higher education of Clarence's race, believing it not merely inadvisable, but impossible. This prejudice was responsible for his ignorance of the fact that Clarence, if left alone for a few minutes, was quite able to extract various items of valuable information from the books. To be sure,

his education had not developed his native stupidity to the point where he himself realized all the uses to which this ability might be put. Still, the ability was there.

Clarence was walking by Isidoro's shop on the evening of the tenth day of the lottery when he was called inside by no less a personage than the proprietor himself. There was a brief conversation in the little office and Clarence departed with five big silver pesos clinking joyfully in his pocket. The next day he returned again and had a private interview with Don Isidoro. This time Clarence received ten pesos and imparted the information that the Atlas Company's books showed that 21,173 reject bananas had been sold since the lottery started.

This data, coupled with the knowledge that practically all the bananas which had gone into the lottery had necessarily come from the Company, gave Isidoro just the kind of certainty on which he was willing to bet. It made the winning of the prize a mere formality. He had already determined that when he got that free pass to New Orleans he would go second class instead of first, and save the difference to cover his hotel bills.

The shopkeeper was a man of prompt action. Within the hour he despatched two wagons in charge of his son, a youth in whose smooth tongue and curious morals the law of heredity was well exemplified. All of the doings and adventures of Malditas junior on this expedition need not be related. It is enough to say that he arrived after some hours at the nearest banana farm. There he did some bargaining with a native foreman, and finally returned with his wagons to the paternal roof-tree a little before daylight the following morning.

Early on the last day but one, two wagons backed up to the lottery offices, and the drivers began carrying the battered kerosene oil tins and old soap boxes with which they were laden into the receiving-room which was then doing business. From their evident weight the tins and boxes were all well filled.

The loafers and policemen who were always hanging about exclaimed with awe-struck astonishment. Here indeed was a plunger. Here was some one who was going after the prize in earnest.

Speculation as to who it was and curi-

osity as to the number of chances he was buying had reached a fever heat when one of the peons carelessly let a box drop from his shoulder. The loosely tacked-on lid fell off and there spilled out on the floor a heap of dirt and gravel and one banana! The crowd howled with delight, and in half an hour the report was all over town that the performance had been a clever ruse of the lottery company to throw the utmost possible doubt on the amount that had been taken in.

As the last of the wagon loads were being carried in amid the jeers of the bystanders, Isidoro Malditas sauntered over from his shop, ostentatiously holding a banana in one hand and a five-cent piece in the other.

"I have decided to invest, señores," he said, smiling broadly at the crowd.

Once inside the receiving-room he explained that such few bananas as were in the tins and boxes belonged to him, but in the interests of secrecy he would prefer to have them sealed in their present receptacles and taken out only when the lists were closed.

"And the money, gentlemen," he said suavely, "I have here in the form of a certified check. If you will permit, I will put it in the sealed envelope with my guess and then go with one of you to deposit it in the bank. If, when it is opened, the sum is not sufficient I forfeit all rights to the prize."

This seemed fair enough—a little irregular perhaps, but as several of the gentlemen had overdue accounts at Isidoro's shop it was readily agreed that his wishes should be followed. So he slipped his certified check for five hundred pesos into an envelope, which already contained a blanket guess that included all numbers from 31,000 to 41,000. The envelope, sealed and attested by signature and thumb print, was then taken to the bank by a police lieutenant and Don Isidoro.



HAVING seen how Don Isidoro so skilfully yet simply got a strangle hold on the prize, let us return for a moment to our young friend Clarence Aubrey. With his ten easily earned pesos fairly setting fire to his pockets, Clarence had gone straight to the bar of the Internacional. There, by way of temporary relief from the strain of his plethora, he haughtily suffered two fellow countrymen to black his generously proportioned boots

while, with lordly aplomb, he sipped a Scotch and soda.

The first drink finished, he ordered another, and with the dregs of the second there came to Clarence a brilliant idea. We have already said, you will remember, that Clarence was laboring under a very superior education. So it occurred to him, in one of those flashes of clear thinking that come to all trained minds, that knowledge which could be sold once, could be sold twice, thrice, endlessly; that he had in his fuzzy pate a source of infinite wealth. And the sooner he began to realize on it the better.

The nearest man to hand who had sufficient financial standing was Don Nicolás Malhuevos, the proprietor of the International. Clarence delayed not in approaching him. The profits from the hotel business were not so great that Don Nicolás scorned to pick up a little easy money on the side, so inside of an hour he had the information and Clarence had twenty pesos. But also, alas, the worthy Jamaican was dead drunk and safely locked up in a room in a deserted wing in the hotel, there to stay until the lottery closed. In some respects Don Nicolás was a more cautious man than Don Isidoro. His only slip was in believing that he was Clarence's first customer.

So it was that about the time the younger Malditas was driving his wagons back to Aguacate, the urbane hotel keeper was bobbing about in a small boat conducting negotiations with the bo'sun of a steamer which had received its load of bananas and was lying at anchor in the harbor, waiting for morning before sailing.



WE LEFT Don Isidoro at the bank, whither he had gone with the police lieutenant. Let us hasten back to him, for just as he was leaving something very startling happened. A man on horseback came tearing along the street.

"Fire! Fire! Fire!" he was shouting as fast and loud as his breath and the necessity of staying in the saddle would permit him.

The police lieutenant rushed back to the lottery offices, but Don Isidoro remained in the street to see the excitement.

The whole town broke into an uproar. Church bells began clanging wildly. A red-shirted fire brigade swiftly gathered from all points of the compass and attempted the difficult feat of running in every direction at once. Shopkeepers

closed their doors and joined the excited crowd. Schoolrooms were deserted. Blaring trumpets in the barracks showed that the troops were being turned out.

Among all the business interests of the city the only men to stay at their posts were the barkeepers and the bank tellers; also the officials of the lottery. Finally, after many false starts, it was discovered that the fire was away off in the outskirts of the town and thither went all the world as fast as their legs could carry them.

Clarke ran out of the office of the *Independencia* and, following along with the crowd, came across Mr. Murdock just as the latter reached the burning house. The building was a large but dilapidated palm shack and the big, heavy-set manager was watching it burn with a curious expression.

"Hello, Clarke," he said as the younger man came up. "How's the market rigger to-day? You better hump yourself with your bull movement."

"Just you wait," said Clarke with a cheerfulness he was far from feeling. "I'll run the price up to the sky yet. Who does the house belong to?" he asked by way of changing the subject.

Mr. Murdock grunted.

"No one, I guess. The land is ours. Just bought it of old Malhuevos. Told him he could take the shack off if he wanted to. But I guess he won't do it now. It is no good anyhow, so he's saved trouble. I don't see him around. Do you?"

Don Nicolás was letting his house burn down without even troubling himself to watch it. This was not due to laziness, but because he was very busy just then delivering at the back door of the lottery building some ten thousand bananas. That his worthless house should happen to be burning at the same time was a fortunate coincidence which freed him from an inquisitive audience. Don Nicolás was also anxious to keep the exact number of his deposit from the lottery officials themselves, though he was not quite certain how this could be done. At the suggestion of the police lieutenant who had been with Don Isidoro, practically the same course was followed, except that instead of a certified check Don Nicolás sealed up a package of bills containing five hundred pesos. In this package he put his guess, which took in all numbers from 31,500 to 41,499.



THAT evening a certain police lieutenant, who it happened was a nephew of his Excellency the Governor, dropped in at the Internacional and dined with the courtly, smooth-mannered proprietor. As they sat over their coffee and cigarettes he first caused the estimable host considerable annoyance by signing a *chit* for the champagne he had ordered, and then let fall a few whispered remarks that made the poor man's hair stand on end. Then he left and walked down the street to the club, smiling to himself as he went.

There he found Don Isidoro practising billiard strokes. The lieutenant joined him in a game and when it was over imparted some information that assuredly would have made the shopkeeper's hair stand on end had he not been bald. The Governor's nephew then went home with a comfortable feeling of having earned a substantial claim on avuncular gratitude.

Three men in Aguacate were unable to sleep that night. Both Don Isidoro and Don Nicolás had horrible visions of five hundred hard-earned pesos gone to the dogs. But neither one of them knew that the other had been advised of his peril, so each felt that there might yet be some way of protecting his investment, and by the time the dawn came slipping in from the sea they had both decided on the same method of retrieving the disaster.

Young Clarke knew that both plungers had at least pretended to make a heavy investment; but yet he was not sure. No one had read Don Isidoro's check or counted the money of Don Nicolás. The whole thing might have been a huge practical joke. So he had his array of horrible visions. They were mostly concerned with the consequences which were bound to ensue if the receipts of the lottery fell short of the liabilities, since he had quite given up hope of making good his boast about the price of bananas. Over in the jail was a sentry who called the hours, and every time his voice rang out in the still night air Clarke felt the gooseflesh rise on his body.

But there was one man in the city who was enjoying a sweet repose that contained enough of perfect tranquillity to make up for all three of these nervous ones. Standing up from the gubernatorial pillow was a pair of spiked mustache ends which swayed with gentle rythm to the soft, regular breathing that comes only with a contented,

happy sleep. The Governor had received a note from his nephew just before he retired.



THE lottery was to close at noon and the last sale of rejected bananas was held at nine o'clock that same morning. A few minutes before it opened a considerable crowd had gathered on the wharf, for at the last moment a good many daring gamblers decided to fling away another five cents or so. Much to the surprise of every one the heap of fruit to be sold was three times as big as usual. When Clarke saw this he knew that all hope of a closing rally was gone. The market was swamped. The young man's cheerful, confident smile did not leave him, but it was such a ghastly parody on his real feelings that he felt that every one who looked at him must know what a mask it was.

Mr. Murdock, who had come to witness the final chapter of young Clarke's abortive bull campaign, displayed great indignation when he saw the number of bananas on sale. It was not giving the boy a fair show.

"What do you mean by having that many?" he asked the wharf superintendent with asperity.

"Well, sir," explained his subordinate, "there was a man threw a fit in a car that was being unloaded an hour ago, and by the time they'd collared him, he'd spoiled half the fruit in the car."

He did not explain, because he did not know, that the man had been hired to throw the fit by Don Nicolás. The far-sighted hotelkeeper had determined that if he were going to make another investment to protect his original five hundred pesos, there should be no question of half measures. He meant to make certain this time.

The first purchaser when the sale began was a local barber who bought an entire stalk at two cents. Then a dozen ragged urchins each bought a single banana at the same price. At this point a pudgy little man, whose haggard face showed he had passed a sleepless night, slipped out from behind a pile of boxes and spoke in the salesman's ear.

"Two cents apiece for them all," whispered Don Nicolás.

At that precise moment Don Isidoro, who had arrived a little late, elbowed his way to the front of the crowd and seeing the rascally hotelkeeper instantly divined his purpose.

"Wait! Wait!" screamed Don Isidoro in a shrill treble. "I will buy them all."

The salesman hesitated. Murdock, standing at his elbow, quickly guessed something of the situation.

"Auction 'em off in one lot, Jim," he directed.

The young man climbed on a box and waved for silence.

"Now then," he shouted, "at what rate will any gentleman take the whole lot?"

He turned and ran his eye over the heap. "It'll run to about five thousand," he added.

An irresponsible ragamuffin in the crowd yelled out, "Half a cent."

"Two cents," called Isidoro, panting with fury at the grafting hotelkeeper who was trying to rob him of the fruits of a well considered investment.

"Two and a half," whispered Nicolás, almost speechless with rage at the scheming shopkeeper who sought to defraud him of an honest profit.

"Three!" shouted Isidoro defiantly.

There was a pause. The auctioneer looked interrogatively at Nicolás, and Clarke held his breath until he saw the answering nod.

"Three and a half," announced the auctioneer. "Who says four?"

Old Don Isidoro clenched his fists, gritted his teeth, and softly cursed Nicolás and his ancestors for many generations. Then he drew a long breath.

"Five!" he bawled out at the top of his voice.

Nicolás answered him with a volley of language, the mildest statement in which was a strongly expressed desire that Isidoro be made to eat every one of those bananas instant. But the hotelkeeper was beaten, and Isidoro took the bananas.

Mr. Murdock worked his way through the excited crowd to Clarke.

"Young man," he said, drawing him to one side, "you're on the payroll from today. You can have two days to wind this thing up."

He looked at Clarke quizzically a moment, and went on.

"Now do you mind telling me how in the world you got the Government to let you run this thing when you didn't have the capital to secure the prize?"

Clarke grinned.

"Since you're my boss now, I'd just as soon tell you. His Excellency the Governor gets every cent of the profits. If there had been a loss it was agreed I was to be the goat, and he would have put me in jail and thrown the key away and posed as having been buncoed by me."



WHILE Don Isidoro was loading his bananas on carts Clarke rushed back to the lottery office. A curious sight met his eyes. Stretching from the door for over a square block along the street were three lines of little barefooted men clad in dirty blue drill, each with a single banana in his hand. They were the entire enlisted strength of the infantry regiment which formed the garrison of Aguacate. The organization was naturally under the orders of his Excellency the Governor.

The three lines were slowly, man by man, filing into the three receiving-rooms. There each man paid his five cents, deposited his banana and turned in his guess, properly sealing and attesting it. All this was done painstakingly, methodically and very slowly. The supervisors and inspectors found it necessary to explain to every soldier as he came in the room just exactly what he had to do, and as most of them were very stupid a great deal of time was being consumed.

"Brrrrrr—szzz—splashhh—plunkety-plunk—brrrr!" screamed Don Isidoro when he arrived with his precious bananas and took in the situation. The Spanish language, with all its wealth of profane expletive, was not equal to his needs. He reverted to the pre-linguistic chatterings and jabberings of his ancestors. Frantically he tried to cut in ahead of the soldiers, but the police threw him out and told him he was in a free country where the rights of the plain people were respected. He must take his place in line like the rest. With tears, protestations and ebullitions of lurid language, he perforce complied.

The soldiers continued to file in with interminable slowness and many sickening delays, while the hands raced around the clock. Though they were inexpressibly slow and stupid in complying with the formalities required by the judges, these humble defenders of their country exhibited great intelligence in one respect. As if by prearranged plan their guesses all ran in

sequence, each man taking the number ahead of the last, and the three lines each working on a different series. Military discipline is a wonderful thing to promote efficient combination of effort.

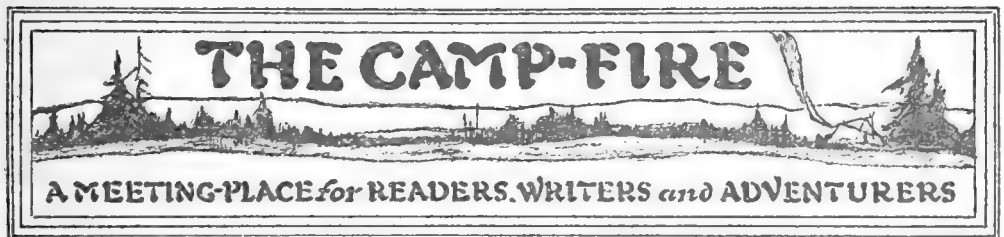
Twelve o'clock tolled out and Isidoro was still waiting. At the first stroke of the bell the police pushed every one who was not actually in the receiving-rooms out on the street. At the second stroke they swung shut the big doors. At the third stroke Don Isidoro fainted.



THREE days later it was announced that the winning number, 53,450, had been filed by Private Juan Garcia. Leave was given the lucky soldier to make a visit to his home. As he was trudging along the road to his native village not far from the city of Aguacate he was met by a gentleman mounted on an excellent horse. He was an angular-looking gentleman who seemed to bristle with spikes

and sharp points. Private Garcia did not seem surprised at meeting him. Greeting him deferentially, though apparently without any great joy, he produced a brown paper parcel from the pocket of his uniform blouse and handed it to him. The gentleman first inspected the contents of the package with some minuteness and then, patting Garcia graciously on the shoulder, resumed his way to Aguacate.

Not long afterward the New York bank account of the Governor of Aguacate was increased by the gold equivalent of eight hundred pesos, which comes to four hundred dollars in eagle brand money. This was in addition to the draft for approximately the same amount which he had deposited as soon as the lottery had been checked up. The next Summer the Colonel of Garcia's regiment took a pleasure trip to New Orleans. Garcia himself occupied his free seat at the moving pictures every night and appeared quite content.



"AM FIGURING on a slow overland journey south, through Mexico, Central and South America. Am absolutely free and am incessantly moving anyway, so I might as well move in one direction and get somewhere." This from a letter I received from Robert J. Pearsall some time ago. He ran away from his Michigan home when sixteen. Since then a hobo trip to Oklahoma, ranching, typesetting, book-selling, a month at home, "various adventures and misadventures (principally the latter)," U. S. Marine Corps, 18 months in the Philippines, 12 at Peking, the Chinese and Japanese Coasts, and a finish of 4 months on the Mexican border. Since then a writer.

Here's something about his story in this issue:

My story, "Anting-Anting," was suggested to me

by two incidents that would seem to have nothing in common. The first happened when I was serving in Olongapo, P. I. I was on guard one day on the causeway when a negro trooper, deserter from Fort McKinley, came in and surrendered; he was barefooted, his clothes were torn to shreds, and he was in the same pitiable condition of funk that I have described in the case of Zuder. He kept repeating, "My God! My God! My God!" over and over again, and looking first over one shoulder and then over the other. I put him under arrest, of course, and delivered him to the sergeant of the guard, and, as it happened, never saw him again, for the next day I was transferred to Cavite. But I never could forget him or cease wondering what he had seen, or what he thought he had seen, in order to inspire him with such terror.

THAT was some four years ago. Last Spring

I happened to be sitting on a bench in the Suto Gardens, San Francisco. These grounds are very old and are filled with statuary that was once very magnificent but that has been uncared for for many years and is now broken and dilapidated. Happening to look down, I saw at the end of the bench a

footprint that thrilled me for an instant, daylight though it was and in the western world and the twentieth century, with something that pretty closely resembled superstitious fear. It was an exact reproduction of the ordinary conception of the footprint of the Devil, stamped in the soft earth.

I involuntarily glanced over my shoulder and the movement both solved the mystery (for directly behind me was the statue of a satyr with one leg amputated at the knee) and brought to my mind the similar action of the negro renegade. There was the connection; and before I left the bench I had the rest of the story, which is pure fiction, all mapped out.

GEORGE A. SCHREINER, son of a Colonel in the Chasseurs d'Afrique in Algeria, was barred from his intended career as a soldier because of defective vision as a result of too much study. However, relatives in South Africa suggested he might enter such a career in the Transvaal and at the beginning of the Boer War he was commissioned lieutenant of artillery, being later promoted to Captain. After the war he became a special agent of the Boer interests, and later rose from reporter to managing editor of a Texas daily.

One of his hobbies has been physics and chemistry and he is recognized as an authority on explosives. Another is the literature of ancient history, and he says his one greatest feat is having read the Egyptian "Book of the Dead" in the original hieroglyphic. I wonder whether any other single reader, writer or editor of this magazine has done the same. It strikes me as "some adventure."

I think you will find a peculiar interest in his "War Day by Day," from the record of his own experiences, whether you yourself know war at first-hand or not.

HERE is an example of the human interest that lies behind our "Lost Trails" column. Now and then somebody makes my eyes bulge by asking whether the items in "Lost Trails" and "Wanted" are really genuine, the inference being that we make them up in the office.

Now there is one curious point about that. No one of the doubters has been a writer of fiction. Writers of fiction have a trained eye for detecting the difference between fact and "make-believe." If I had to invent those items every month I'd go crazy.

If any one has serious doubts, I can settle them for him if he'll take a little trouble and

spend a few cents in postage stamps. Meanwhile here's the letter pertaining to "Lost Trails:"

As a regular reader I purchased my copy to read going home in the train and in casually looking over the "Lost Trails" I saw the name "Barwick." The next day I left my copy at home and was assigned to a pier in this city, and on becoming acquainted with the Customs Inspector learned his name was Barwick. At the close of the day I looked at his signature but found it differed in one letter. Yesterday I brought my copy with me, and being on a pier only a few city blocks distant, I sent word to him to come over and see me as I had something which might interest him to know. During the forenoon he came over and I told him of the "Lost Trails" in *ADVENTURE* and showed him where one Barwick asked for news of three brothers, and he at once became elated in finding his long-lost brother, he and the advertiser being the two brothers living and the other two being dead. I cut the piece out and gave it to him, and I express my thanks to you for him and am glad that I was the means of his being able to find his brother after 33 years through your medium. I feel sure that many are benefited by being found thereby.

I am, dear sir and comrade,

Yours sincerely,

AUG. H. THORGOOD,

Care Treasury Dept., Port of New York.

It adds a touch of humor to the situation that the "lost" brother is now advertising in "Lost Trails" for the "unlost" brother, the latter having moved without leaving his address and the people with whom he lived having done the same. But it's only a matter of time now.

THE only snow Chester T. Crowell remembers seeing was on Mt. Popocatepetl near the City of Mexico. Since his early childhood he has been only once so far north as Dallas, Texas. But they have plenty of baseball in the Lone Star State and—

When I was born in 1888, in Cleveland, Ohio, my father, W. T. Crowell, was star pitcher on the Cleveland team. He was a baseball player till 1897, when he made his last appearance as player, manager and, I believe, owner or part owner of the Houston team of the Texas League. It is from his stories that I gathered much of the material for "Jackrabbit Hobbes." The feature of the old ground-keeper is true in almost every detail except the name.

Mr. Crowell himself has served as reporter and editor on the *Herald* and the *Record*, of Mexico City, and on several Texas papers, with frequent contributions to leading magazines.

HERE, again, is the brief explanation of our identification-cards. They are offered free of charge to any of you. All we ask is that you comply carefully with the simple directions as they appear below in italics:

The cards bear this inscription, printed in English, French, Spanish, German, Portuguese, Dutch, Italian, Arabic, Chinese, Russian, and Japanese:

"In case of death or serious emergency to bearer, address serial number of this card, care of ADVENTURE, New York, U. S. A., stating full particulars, and friends will be notified."

In our office, under each serial number, will be registered the name of bearer and of one friend, with permanent address of each. No name appears on the card. Letters will be forwarded to friend, unopened by us. The names and addresses will be treated as confidential by us. We assume no other obligations. Cards not for purposes of business identification. Later, arrangements may perhaps be made for money deposits to cover cable or telegraph notifications. Cards furnished free of charge, *provided stamped and addressed envelope accompanies application. Send no applications without the two names and two addresses in full.* We reserve the right to use our own discretion in all matters pertaining to these cards.

Later, for the cost of manufacture, we may furnish, instead of the above cards, a card or tag of aluminum, proof against heat, water and general wear and tear, for adventurers when actually in the jungle, desert, etc.

A moment's thought will show the value of this system of card-identification for any one, whether in civilization or out of it. Remember to furnish stamped and addressed envelope and to *give the two names and addresses in full when applying.*

VERY frequently some of you ask me to tell you in advance what good stories we are going to have in the next issue. As you know, I do not use the "Camp-Fire" for blowing our own horn. Nor do I intend to begin. But so many have asked for advance news of what to look for in coming numbers of the magazine and there is so little reason for not telling you if you want to know, that I'm going to set aside the last page of the magazine, quite distinct from the "Camp-Fire," for that purpose each month.

To be frank, I'm all the more ready to do so this month because we have a lot of good things ahead in the way of stories, full book-length novels complete in one issue, serials and articles. Yes, and if I don't stop I'll be talking about them here in the "Camp-Fire." So let's turn to the last page and see what's going to be in the April ADVENTURE.

ARTHUR SULLIVANT HOFFMAN.

WANTED —MEN

NOTE.—We offer this corner of the Camp-Fire, free of charge, to our readers. Naturally we can not vouch for any of the letters, the writers thereof, or any of the claims set forth therein, beyond the fact that we receive and publish these letters in good faith. We reserve the privilege of not publishing any letters or parts of a letter. Any inquiry for men sent to this magazine will be considered as intended for publication, at our discretion, in this department, with all names and addresses given therein printed in full, unless such inquiry contains contrary instructions. In the latter case we reserve the right to substitute for real names any numbers or other names. We are ready to forward mail through this office, but assume no responsibility therefor. Items asking for money rather than men will not be published.

WANT four capable young men for expedition into Mexico; men who have roughed it in the Southwest preferred. Must be good horsemen, able to stand long, hard rides, and have thorough knowledge of firearms. Will be in no way concerned with the present disturbances, being of purely private nature. State qualifications.—Address H. A. CLOCK, 135 South Evergreen, Los Angeles, Calif.

WANT young man, 21 to 23, to meet me in Denver, to start for Coast as soon as possible. Don't need much money. Must be straight. Must be able to shoot and cook. Object: adventure and any loose change we can pick up. References exchanged.—Address D. A. HUTCHINGS, care Y. M. C. A., Denver, Colo.

LOOKING for a pard for South America, starting this Spring, one in no hurry to cover ground, with no desire to cover same trail twice. Plans now are from St. Paul in houseboat down river to New Orleans, thence to South America on foot. May take a year or two to get there or only 6 months.

Have stake of \$200. Partner should have same. Can't savvy Spanish and would like to hitch up with some one who can. Am easy to get along with; square, never went back on a pard, don't booze or bother with women. Outside of that, don't care whether school keeps or not. 135 pounds, 5 ft. 11 in. No spare fat, built like a spring and don't get sick. American, age 26.—Address No. W 72.

WANTED—a good man to help organize a colony in Paraguay. Know the River Plata from Buenos Ayres to Brazil. Have photos taken by myself. Have copy of the laws of Paraguay. Know exactly what business each man can engage in to make money; what each ought to take, and what to leave. Can take everything you want into Paraguay, free of import duty, and can give a free passage twelve hundred miles up the River Plata.

Can give all information necessary. Been an adventurer all my life. Now traveling in the West with a carnival company.—Address B. L. HOLLAND, care Bill Board, Cincinnati, Ohio.

WANT to get in touch with gentleman, age 24 to 35, for trip around world. He must be a congenial, good fellow, who will stick to a pal from — to Harlem. Have a plan to supply funds and furnish a little excitement also. Knowledge of foreign languages preferred; I know only Holland Dutch and English. Expect to have \$500 to \$1000 to start with, and should expect my partner to have small roll also.

Age 27, French-Dutch descent, well educated, of adventurous nature.—Address No. W 211.

HAVE retained noted mining engineer, geologist and explorer, to locate for me some of the richest gold and silver mines in South America. He knows the country and can get necessary concessions.

Am paying him \$10,000, but he is to obtain coffee and cattle lands in addition to the mines.

Want as associates five college graduates of a school of mines or engineering, willing to invest enough to tie them to the project. This is a legitimate opportunity for adventure and profit. Men must be willing to work and stand hardships. No weaklings or grumblers wanted. Plenty of game, fish, and Indians. Banking references exchanged. No attention paid letters without recommendations.—Address P. O. Box 247, Laredo, Texas.

WHEN the following notice first came it recalled a Brazilian venture of which a man I know had been one of the victims. I sent No. W 104's letter to this friend, and sent the friend's reply to No. W 104. No. W 104 writes me that his venture is not at all the same one which victimized my friend, and possibly some of you who read this.

Beyond the above I have no information in the matter, and publish No. 104's notice exactly as we publish all other notices in this department—without in any way assuming any responsibility therefor. In all cases it is for you to do the investigating.

AT RIO DE JANEIRO, Col. G., owner of extensive diamond fields, offered me fifty per cent. if I would get a number of "brave men" together to work the mines, as Indians have thus far killed all men he had sent. He showed wonderful specimens of cut and uncut diamonds.

If ten fellows with ample nerve will follow me, I will take them to the Colonel's diamond fields, and am certain we can work them on even better terms than 50 per cent. In fact, I believe I can locate an unappropriated district. Men must be prepared with means to get to Rio de Janeiro and to buy outfit suitable for the work, the perils and eventualities of climatic conditions. Also to handle men, as a large force of natives will have to be taken as carriers, and to bear the brunt of all eventualities. The adventurous will here get what they seek and to spare.—Address No. W 104.

AM STARTING an expedition of trappers for the Hudson Bay country along the Peace River, and should like to have 25 stalwart young men versed in woodcraft and able to use trap and gun, canoe and snowshoes. Each man must be able to pass an examination relative to the northern woods and rivers, and to show that he understands and loves an outdoor life. We furnish everything—guns, clothes, and grub—and pay \$60 per month for a three-year expedition. For examination papers address P. L. FLANNIGAN, 328½ South Victoria Av., Pueblo, Colo.

WANTED, partner to go on an expedition to a certain island in the Southern Pacific with a limited equipment and live for three years on our own wits and ingenuity. Must be under 22 and over 17, of good health, a fair shot, and must have a fair mechanical knowledge. Also he must be willing to obey orders. The backers will furnish all equipment and the steamer fare. Send answer and picture to J. C. DORR, 1309 17th Street, N. W., Washington, D. C.

WANT to take a boat and 15 to 20 men and go after some placer deposits I know of on the Pacific Coast. Each man will have to put up from \$500 to \$700 (depending on the number), and every one will share alike. I want nothing for my knowledge of the deposits and will put up mine with the rest. I want a mining engineer, an assayer, men for the dry washers and the concentrating tables, a master who knows the Pacific Coast from San Francisco to Iquique, and men who can handle the boat. There will be no crew taken, as I expect the men in the expedition to do all of the work necessary.

There will be no "denouncing" these deposits, as they are situated in a savage country where the Government has no control of the natives. There have been several expeditions started overland for these placers, but none of them has ever returned. The deposits are on the shore, and are of exceeding richness. Have seen some of these placers, but, being in the country on an ambassadorial mission for the Government, could not take a sample out.

There will be a competent medical officer with the expedition, and I want every one else that may make up the party to be as competent. Want seasoned men who have been through the mill to go with me, as the success of the trip depends on the experience of the men in the party. I would rather all applicants spoke Spanish—and they will all have to produce the goods before they are taken on. I think a great deal of my sweet young life and have no intention of trusting it to the judgment of a bunch of inexperienced men. I would like to hear from such men as Crawford, the "*quisico en jefe*" at Asarco.

Outfitting the expedition is the only expense, as the boat would have to be purchased outright, owing to the tide rip at the site of the placers. Have seen a 24 ft. tide rip there. There will be fighting, and much profit will accrue, as the deposits are absolutely unworked and are richer than any Klondike placer ever dared to be.—Address No. W 205.

AS I AM planning to go on a placer prospecting trip to the Snake River or along the Cascade streams in Washington State, I would like any advice from Camp-Fire boys, as to the best location and if it is a sensible trip. Surely there should be some old timers who would not refuse to put me right and wish me well.—Address No. W 212.

LOST TRAILS

NOTE—We offer this department of the "Camp-Fire" free of charge to those of our readers who wish to get in touch again with old friends or acquaintances from whom the years have separated them. For the benefit of the friend you seek, *give your own name if possible*. All inquiries along this line, unless containing contrary instructions, will be considered as intended for publication in full with inquirer's name, in this department, at our discretion. We reserve the right, in case inquirer refuses his name, to substitute any numbers or other names, to reject any item that seems to us unsuitable, and to use our discretion in all matters pertaining to this department. Give also your own full address. We will, however, forward mail through this office, assuming no responsibility therefor. We have arranged with the Montreal *Star* to give additional publication in their "Missing Relatives Column," weekly and daily editions, to any of our inquiries for persons last heard of in Canada.

AM LOOKING for young Jack V. ("Robbie") Macneill, whom I met in Mexico. He potted a Mex. who had designs on my scalp. He's about 5 ft. 6 or 7 in., brownish hair. Draws pictures. Got lost from him in the street-fighting in Torreon. He lived in Montreal for a while. Maybe if he sees this he'll let me know. He's a good scout and I like him.—Address No. L. T. 179.

JOHN AVA MACDONALD, Left Winnipeg ostensibly for Minneapolis two years ago. Was in employ of International Harvester at Weyburn and Regina, Sask.—Address MRS. D. C. C. MACDONALD, 729 Lipton Street, Winnipeg, Manitoba.

J. W. LANDRUM, Kentuckian, formerly of Atlanta, whom I met in Havana, Dec., 1906. Communicate at once. Important information that will be to your financial advantage.—Address S. N. MORGAN, Box 256, Augusta, Ga.

FRIENDS, Am located in Tampa, Fla., with the movies. Always glad to hear from friends.—Address CAPT. JACK BONAVIDA, Sulphur Springs, Tampa, Florida.

JOHN HADDOCK (Sen.) or any one knowing his address communicate. Was in Dawson, Fall of 1899. Address JAS. A. HILLYER, Keystone, Nevada.

THE brother who advertised for me between 1895-1900 in a St. Jo. newspaper can reach me at address below. Any one who knows anything about my family, please write.—Address CLAUD HIATT, care E. Harding, 111 North 18th St., St. Joseph, Mo.

Please notify us at once when you have found your man.

PETER ROGERS of Manchester, Eng. Last heard of in Victoria, B. C. Nephew wishes to hear from him.—Address SIDNEY MOORES, 332 Highland Ave., Arlington, N. J.

THEODORE V. JESSUP, age 47 or 48. Last heard from was going to Panama. Write.—Address, A. M. JESSUP, Box 732, Lamar, Colorado.

JOHN R. LEE, of Amsterdam, N. Y.; last seen in Amsterdam Feb. 4, 1912. Age 62, 185 pounds, 5 ft. 10 in.; gray hair; wore a slight gray mustache. Information gratefully received.—Address G. L. L., 291 Guy Park Avenue, Amsterdam, New York.

Please notify us at once when you have found your man.

CHARLES NEALE, late of 20th Hussars, last heard of in Johannesburg; William Neale, late of 7th Hussars, last heard of in Farnborough, Hants, Eng.; Ernest Neale, last heard of in London. Write your brother.—Address ED. NEALE, Musician, 114th Co., C. A. C., Ft. Totten, N. Y.

ROBERT VERNE STEPHENSON, age 23, brown hair, blue eyes, very flat nose. Last heard of in McKenny, Tex., two years ago; intended going to Mexico or California.—Address MISS MARGARET STEPHENSON, 2809 Central Avenue, Tampa, Florida.

JAMES SHANNON or William Shannon, communicate with Margaret Shannon at 145 West 66th Street, New York. Am daughter to James Shannon and niece to William. Last heard of uncle at Winnipeg, Canada. Father also somewhere in Canada. Would like to hear from him as I am one of his two children left of family of three.—Address MARGARET SHANNON, 145 West 66th St., New York City.

H. H. HELLMANN, News wanted.—Address Charlie, the Island Qu. St., San Francisco, Calif.

HENRY FRANCIS, Was with Capt. Hart, U. S. S. *Trenton*, Samoa, March 24, 1899, and last seen in Bellaire, O., Oct. 30, 1913.—Address W. M. FAWCETT, 86 New Jersey St., Wheeling, W. Va.

JACK PAVILLA, One time member of the "Jacky J. Wonders" acrobatic troupe, touring America. Married in San Francisco 20 years ago. Wife's maiden name was Mason; had two children, a girl and boy. Last heard of in San Francisco. Would confer a great favor by reporting his whereabouts to old friend.—Address PERCY H. CLIFFORD, care T. H. BRIDSON, 404 S. D. St., San Mateo, Calif.

CLYDE C. DEOTZ, Last known in Tonalá, Chiapas, Mexico. Also Grady S. McRae of the Seventy-five Old Timers for the Golden West.—Address W. L. ROGERSON, 327 Lockwood Pl., Jacksonville, Ill.

NO. 56. Please send us your present address. Letters forwarded to address given us don't reach you.—Address A. S. HOFFMAN, care ADVENTURE.

Please notify us at once when you have found your man.

FRANK EPLY RICHARDSON, Left Milwaukee in September, probably headed for a South American port.—Address, LOUIS ZAPPERT, Gen. Delivery, North East, Pennsylvania.

CAPTAIN BILLY O'NEIL, Formerly 7th U. S. Cavalry.—Address No. L. T. 207.

JOHN F. MORIARTY, WILBURN JAY, Formerly of Madero Foreign Legion.—Address No. L. T. 207.

ARCHIBALD MEYRICK, Lieutenant in Prince of Wales's Light Horse, Boer War.—Address EMINION MEYRICK, General Delivery, Minneapolis.

ED MCGONIGAL, Marine on U. S. S. *Lancaster* at Montevideo, Uruguay, in '97.—Address G. C. MCNEIL, Box 451, Charleston, W. Va.

HEIRS OF GLEN BROOK, Property in S. America.—Address GEO. BLANCHARD, Box 261, Wessington Springs, S. Dak.

"DUTCHY" SWEIDERT, (Phonetic spelling.) Mixed up in the Panama-Colombia scrap, and in Guatemala and Nicaragua revolutions. Also fought for Castro. Last heard of working for mining company near Tegucigalpa, Honduras. Information wanted.—Address M. G. BOGAN, Gen. Del., New Orleans.

WALTER P. WILLBERN, Last heard of on Maltby Ave., Norfolk.—Address JOHN BORGHOFF, 402 16th Street, Omaha, Neb.

GORDON HASKINSON (English), STANLEY. DAY. Last heard of at Ft. Dodge, Ia., 1912.—Address JAMES R. FRASER, *Dramatic Mirror*, New York City.

STANLEY S. WEST, Late editor *Santiago Herald*, reporter *London Daily Mail*, Hearst papers.—Address No. L. T. 210.

"FRANK" McDANIEL, Pugilist, drummer. Write, Important.—Address No. L. T. 210.

Please notify us at once when you have found your man.

JESS PARKER, Last heard of with cow outfit in N. E. Wyoming.—address No. L. T. 105.

JACK BONHAM, Born Hastings, Eng. Band of Royal Sussex 1900-6. To Sherbrooke, P. Q., Canada, March, 1906. Last heard from Aug. 1906, Sherbrooke. Natural musician. Word wanted by mother.—Address MRS. JEAN BONHAM, care ADVENTURE.

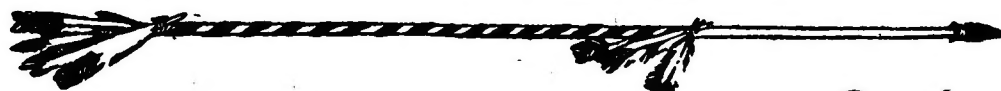
JOHN SERRANO, FRANK CRIEGER, C. J. CALHOUN, Please write A. S. HOFFMAN, care ADVENTURE.

THE following have been inquired for in previous issues of "Lost Trails." They can get name of inquirer from this magazine:

TAYLOR McDANIELS; L. H. Dwight, Hospital Corps, Philippines, 1900; Thomas George Dixon Morris, Comrades in Co. E, 20th U. S. Infantry, Troop E, 7th U. S. Cavalry; Hospital Corps, 23d U. S. Infantry, 40th U. S. V.; Joe Moulder, Herman Stearns, Any one 4th Texas Vol. Infantry in Spanish War, Richard L. Shepherd, Vancouver and Toronto; Corp. Guito K. Suite, Boer comrades at Ladysmith and along Tugela, also John Murray, Tom Morris, James McTigh, Jack Ryan; George B. Craven, once of *Wilmington Morning Star*; A. G. Christensen, South America; Jim Conelly, Isaac Raansvaal, Co. I, 9th U. S. I.; Al H. Brooks, rancher, Canada; Benjamin F. Megie, South America or South Africa; James Dalziel, bark *Sacoba*; William Chalmers Smith, Mexico; Willis Cory (Red, Kentucky, or Wins Golden), Philippines, Tex., Calif.; Fred Knudsen, *Red Rock, Balmoral*, *Willis A. Holden*; Jasper, Key West, Mexico; Old shipmates British bark *Lycerhorn*; William O'Meara, bark *Guiana*, '86; Miles G. Wiley, Conrad A. Engesser; William Le Vande; Clarence Rae, P. J. R.; Jimmie Gibney, F. A. Sherwood; Edward P. Doyle, formerly 7th U. S. C.; Harry C. Robertson, customs, Manila; William McElvain; Capt. C. D. Morine, R. E. Smith, *Olympia* at Manila; Chas. Bush, once U. S. N.; John W. ("Red") Bardsley, Big Mentusha; "Lee" or P. M. Morris; Roland Henry Crane; Wm. G. Tice; Jack Costelloe, Australian; Patrick Michael and James Cunningham; comrades of "Linic", O'Sea on "El Rayo"; Ed (Wessel) Deckard; J. W. McKinzie, formerly U. S. N.; Frank Miller, John and Lee Crawford, Wm. Hanson; Capt. Vaughn or any comrades of Percy Tressider; Capt. F. T. Parker; T. S. M. Cottrell, Corp. McEwen Cooper, Sergt. Dacombe, once Troop B, M. M. P.; also Capt. Nesbitt, V. C., and other comrades of M. M. Marsden; Howard Irvin, on *Mail*; '11; G Oliver, Iquique '98; Gordon Law, Simon P. Calp; Charles Goodrich, once U. S. N. H. C.; comrades of Capt. F. E. Van Leue; A. S. O'Connor, Bob Ross, Jimmie Van Damme, Hans Kufke, Jack Griffiths, Julian Harries, Jack Gardiner, once E and C Troops, B. S. A. P.; Edward J. Raeder; Martin Lane, U. S. A.; Klondike; Charlie Schaeffer, Sonora; Dick Martel, Hermosillo; Charlie Sutherland, once Bechuanaland Police; Jack Prout, Porcupine; Fred Scott, once Pennsylvania newspaper man; George Dean, whaling bark *Canton*; Oscar Smith, Australian; Percy M. DuBois, R. R. Plum, Joe Enscoe, Chas. Carruthers, Lester Selig, Thos. L. Hogan, Andy Osbourne, once of the *Evening Star*, Pete Meissner, Grajervo.

MANUSCRIPTS sent us by the following are being held by us, having been returned to us as unclaimed at the addresses furnished:

Julia A. Sill, New York; W. Lynch, Trenton, N. J.; W. Mack, Pachica, Mexico; Henry W. Edwards, New York; W. G. Gormley, Ontario, Canada; George Stillions, Chicago, Ill.; Francis Manson, Chico, Cal.



THE TRAIL AHEAD *For the benefit of those of our readers who want to know in advance what stories are coming to them in ADVENTURE we set aside this last page of the magazine.*

DURING the past three years ADVENTURE has been growing from good to something better. We are going to make ADVENTURE this year better than its best of previous years. Gradually we have got the authors we want, learned the likes of our readers and the possibilities of our field. We would be dull indeed if this experience had not taught us something. We have planned for this year, as the result of it, a magazine of much broader scope, better quality and greater strength than in the past. Whatever your walk in life, it will be *your* magazine. Every issue will give you two things:

- (1) A complete, full book-length novel that would cost from \$1.00 to \$1.50 in book form.
- (2) In addition, a dozen or more stories of adventure in business, war, love, sports, and some real humor that will make you forget all your troubles.

Below are some of the features already in hand. They are only a taste of what is to follow:

By LOUIS TRACY
A Complete Book-
Length Novel

Author of "The Wings of the Morning"
"The Captain of the Kansas"
"The Pillar of Light"

"**SYLVIA'S SUITORS**," this new novel by Louis Tracy, is a detective, mystery and love story that will make you forget the clock. You will also chuckle a few chuckles over the friendly struggle between two great detectives who chuckle some themselves. Complete in one issue. Read it.

"THE LAUGHING CAVALIER" by the BARONESS ORCZY A Novel (Sequel to "The Scarlet Pimpernel")

BUT it is *not* a sequel. You've read "The Scarlet Pimpernel" or seen the play. You've also seen that famous painting, "The Laughing Cavalier," by the great artist Frans Hals. Well, the Laughing Cavalier was an ancestor of the Scarlet Pimpernel—the ancestor from whom he got his dash, nerve and courage, a soldier of fortune whose adventures in love, war and politics make a serial story that is a story.

TALBOT MUNDY Is Writing a New Novel for Us

TALBOT MUNDY needs no recommendation with our readers. He is one of the many writers who made their beginning with this magazine and have grown up with it. His first serial, now running in our pages, has already been taken for book publication by Scribner's in this country and by Cassell & Co. abroad. His coming novel of adventure, he tells us, is half again as good.

"THE MAN WITH NINE LIVES" by RICHARD MARSH

RICHARD MARSH has a big following of fiction readers on both sides of the Atlantic. "The Man with Nine Lives" is a man who needed all nine of them in his tremendous struggle with a gang of criminals. A full book-length novel complete in one issue. Mystery, crime, business, love, adventure.

"THE STRONGER CALL" by ROBERT V. CARR

WHOEVER has felt the tug of the *Wanderlust*, whoever has known the love of woman, will "eat up" this complete novelette.

BASEBALL STORIES by HUGH FULLERTON BOZEMAN BULGER

THESE two men, in the foremost rank of baseball writers, are only two on the list contributing baseball stories that are baseball stories.

"COME-ON CHARLEY"—Don't Jump at Conclusions

COME-ON CHARLEY is the hero of a series of stories that are going to mark an era for you. We back him to become a familiar name from coast to coast. No one has met him yet. We give you the first chance. He's no fool.

"MISS DEMONSTRATOR" Attention, Human Beings, Especially Stage Folk!

WE HAVE secured a series of stories by C. Hilton-Turvey that are going to make a big place for the "leading lady," Miss Demonstrator. Humor and human interest till you have one ache in the sides and another in the heart.

THE OLD GUARD AND THE NEW

THE "old guard"—the writers who have made ADVENTURE what it is—are still with us, and a flying column of new troops has joined them for the biggest campaign yet. We have given above all that our space permits. Month by month we will make further announcement of other good things in store for you. Watch ADVENTURE this year—"the magazine with the punch." *Your* magazine.

THE APRIL ADVENTURE

"Sylvia's Suitors," Complete Novel, by Louis Tracy

"The Chang-Hwa Pearl," by H. D. Couzens

"Hit by Pitched Ball," a Baseball Story, by Hugh S. Fullerton

"By Primitive Code," by Earl Ennis

AND a football story, a detective story, a horse-trading story, a prize-fight story, two serials, and all the kinds of adventure stories there are.

The *Trained* Man Never Worries



When the chiefs put their heads together to hire or "fire," the really efficient man doesn't worry. He *knows* his efficiency will take care of him, and that there is always a place for him.

YOU can look your job and every man in the face if you possess the Efficiency so much in demand everywhere today. Simply because your schooling is limited doesn't mean that you cannot acquire that Efficiency. Because you live far away from the busy city doesn't prevent you. What you do or how little you can earn are not obstacles.

If you are ambitious, the International Correspondence Schools will go to you in *your spare time*, wherever you live, and will train you to become an expert in your *chosen line* of work.

It costs you nothing to find out *how* the I. C. S. can help you. Simply mark the attached coupon opposite the occupation for which you have a natural liking, mail the coupon today, and the I. C. S. will send you facts and advice showing how you can rise to better things in the occupation of *your own choice*.

Decide today to learn *how*. Make your first move off the "anxious" seat by marking and mailing the coupon **NOW**.

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Explain, without further obligation on my part, how I can qualify for the position before which I mark **X**.

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Architectural Draftsman
Structural Engineer
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Mechanical Draftsman
Refrigeration Engineer
Civil Engineer
Surveyor
Mine Superintendent
Metal Mining
Locomotive Fireman & Eng.
Stationary Engineer
Textile Manufacturing
Gas Engines

Civil Service
Railway Mail Clerk
Bookkeeping
Stenography & Typewriting
Window Trimming
Show Card Writing
Lettering & Sign Painting
Advertising
Commercial Illustrating
Industrial Designing
Commercial Law
Automobile Running
Teacher
English Branches
Good English for Every One
Agriculture
Poultry Farming
Plumbing & Steam Fitting
Sheet Metal Worker
Navigation
Languages
Chemist

Spanish
French
German

Name _____

Present Occupation _____

Street and No. _____

City _____ State _____

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healthful**

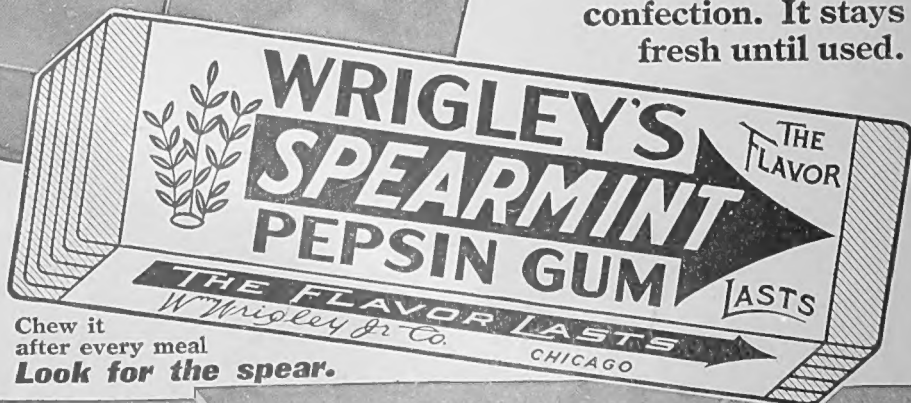
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**is the only gum
I buy any way!"**

**"It brightens my
teeth, stimulates
saliva and aids
digestion."**

**Be SURE it's
WRIGLEY'S.**

**It's the hospitality
confection. It stays
fresh until used.**



**Chew it
after every meal
Look for the spear.**